
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>



THE HOUR OF THE REDEEMER :

A Series of Discourses

PREACHED IN

THE CHAPEL OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

BY

MORTIMER O'SULLIVAN, D.D.,

Prebendary of Ballymore.

PRICE 3s. 6d.

4461. a 34

THE HOUR OF THE REDEEMER.

THE HOUR OF THE REDEEMER :

A Series of Discourses

PREACHED IN THE

CHAPEL OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

BY

MORTIMER O'SULLIVAN, D.D.,

DONNELAN LECTURER FOR THE YEAR 1851,

Prebendary of Ballymore; Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of Manchester :

Author of "The Apostacy predicted by St. Paul," "Newman's Theory of Development tested,"
"Case of the Irish Protestants," "Guide to an Irish Gentleman in
Search of a Religion," &c. &c.

DUBLIN

JAMES McGLASHAN, 50, UPPER SACKVILLE-ST.

J. W. PARKER & SON, WEST STRAND, LONDON.

MDCCCLIII.

DUBLIN :
PRINTED BY ROE AND BRIERLEY,
42, Mabbot-street.



TO THE

REV. CHARLES WILLIAM WALL, D.D.,

VICE-PROVOST OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN,

ETC. ETC.

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF

RELATIONS WHICH CAN NEVER BE FORGOTTEN,

AND

IN ADMIRATION AND RESPECT,

INCREASING WITH INCREASE OF YEARS AND OPPORTUNITIES,

FOR LEARNING, TALENTS, AND MORAL WORTH,

The following Pages

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY

MORTIMER O'SULLIVAN.

EXTRACT

FROM THE

REGISTRY OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

“WHEREAS a legacy of £1243 has been bequeathed to the College of Dublin, by Mrs. Anne Donnelan, for the encouragement of religion, learning, and good manners; the particular mode of application being entrusted to the Provost and Senior Fellows :—

“RESOLVED—

“I.—That a Divinity Lecture, to which shall be annexed a salary arising from the interest of £1200, shall be established for ever, to be called Donnelan’s Lecture.

“II.—That the Lecturer shall be forthwith elected from among the Fellows of said College, and hereafter annually on the 20th of November.

“III.—That the subject, or subjects, of the Lectures shall be determined at the time of election by the Board, to be treated of in Six Sermons, which shall be delivered in the College Chapel, after Morning Service, on certain Sundays, to be appointed on the 20th of November next after the election of the Lecturer, and within a year from said appointment.

“IV.—That one moiety of the interest of the said £1200 shall be paid to the Lecturer, as soon as he shall have delivered the whole number of Lectures, and the other moiety, as soon as he shall have published four of the said Lectures; one copy to be deposited in the Library of the College; one in the Library of Armagh; one in the Library of St. Sepulchre; one to be given to the Chancellor of the University; and one to the Provost of the College.”

LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

ST. JOHN II., part of ver. 4.

"Mine hour is not yet come."

THESE are the words in which our blessed Lord prefaced His "beginning of miracles." What do they import? What was the hour "not yet come" when He spake them, and which He distinguished by pronouncing it His?

To these questions; you are aware, various and conflicting replies have been hazarded. "The hour" of the Lord many have regarded as the time most meet for the performance of the wondrous work which graced the marriage festival. Others have conjectured that it denoted some occasion on which a divine course of miracles in attestation of the Saviour's mission had its public commencement. The words of our Lord have had still bolder interpretations than these, some translating them as an interrogatory, "Is not my hour now come?"—implying the hour when He ceased from subjection to all earthly authority; and some, who sought counsel in the fantasies

B

of a visionary science, arguing, that the Saviour's power was limited within times and seasons, and was liable to disturbance from planetary aspects and influences.

But the expression in my text has received another and a very different interpretation. By "the hour" of the Lord, it has been said, we should understand that awful period in which His work of redemption and atonement was accomplished; and this is, substantially, the interpretation which I would submit to you as most worthy of adoption. It has not had, perhaps, most popular acceptance; but yet it is commended by the authority of high names from ancient days as well as from times more recent. I offer it to you because it appears capable of being established by most certain warranty of Scripture.

The words we desire to understand are written by St. John alone, and the explanation to which I would invite your attention, we may collect with authority in the Gospel written by that Evangelist.

A period of time designated as the hour of the Lord Jesus is named in various instances in the Gospel according to St. John. Three times this hour is represented as "not yet come"—in my text, in chapters vii. 30, and viii. 20. In the two latter instances, it is to be observed, the expression of the Evangelist is not *the* but *His* hour, showing thus a correspondence manifest and precise between the language of the Evangelist and that of the Lord himself at the marriage feast in Cana.

You have observed, that up to the date to which the last of these notices applies, the hour of the Lord "was not yet come." It was not numbered among the hours of the marriage festival; although, on that occasion, Jesus "manifested forth His glory, and His disciples

believed on Him." It "was not come" at a period more advanced in the Gospel history, when the Lord had already done many marvellous works, and spoken gracious words of surpassing wisdom—when "many of the people believed on Him, and said, When Jesus cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"—when "the officers answered, Never man spake like this man." Notwithstanding displays of wisdom and power to which such attestations were given, the glory of them was not yet the full effulgence of the period to which the Lord assigned so eminent a distinction. His hour was "not yet come."

The manner in which the Evangelist, in the seventh and the eighth chapters of the Gospel, writes of that solemn time, makes us acquainted with a characteristic of it not named in the expression of our Lord. "No man laid hands on Him, because *His* hour" (not *the* hour, the hour to lay hands upon Him) "was not yet come," is a foreshadowing of some tribulation by which the hour of the Lord was to be darkened. It was not to come until the time when the Son of Man should be about to be "betrayed into the hands of sinners."

The notices, direct and indirect, of this solemn hour, *when it had come*, are more numerous. In the twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, the Lord is represented as pronouncing that "*the* hour was come in which the Son of Man should be glorified." That the glory of this hour was to have the solemnity of suffering upon it, is clearly to be discerned in the Saviour's words—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die"—"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." Here

are the conditions which were to be incidents of the Lord's hour—glory and tribulation are met upon it.

The season thus illustrated is "the hour" of the Lord. So the Evangelist instructs us.

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew *that His hour was come*, that He should depart out of this world unto the Father,"* &c. In *His* hour, adversaries should lay hands on the Lord, and in *His* hour He should depart out of this world unto the Father. In the sublime appeal and prayer of our Lord (in His own behalf, a voice, as it were, in council, for His people a prayer), when He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour is come," He expressed himself as one who was about to part from the world—"And now I am no more in the world"—"And now I come to thee."

Such are characteristic incidents of a period of time distinguished by being named the hour of the Lord. It is a period of tribulation patiently sustained; of glory, in which a redeemed people are to share; a period in which Jesus should cease to be in the world, and should ascend unto the Father. Before the last Passover He kept on earth, the Lord knew that this "His hour" was "come;"—on the occasion when His first miracle was wrought, He declared that "His hour" was "not yet come." Can there be any just reason assigned for believing that the hour which He spake of at Cana of Galilee was different from that hour so frequently named, and so solemnly characterised in the Gospel? A name is given by the Evangelist, and by our Lord himself, to a certain period of time, of which there are numerous

* St. John xiii. 1.

notices ; on what ground should a meaning be assigned to the name, *in one instance*, which it cannot bear *in any other* ? Or why shall we disregard the interpretation which Holy Scripture seems to provide, and substitute for it something which has no better authority than can be claimed for human inference or conjecture ?

The reason is, perhaps, this : we are unduly anxious to explain our Lord's words in a sense in which they shall appear *obviously* appropriate to the occasion on which they were spoken. "The mother of Jesus said unto Him, They have no wine." If the words of our Lord are necessarily to be understood in a sense in which they express nothing more than a reply to this interruption, other explanations of their meaning may seem more seasonable than that which regards "His hour" as the solemn period of redemption. And it cannot be denied that if the hour thus designated were some point of time during the marriage festival, in which the Lord supplied a deficiency, and worked a marvel, His response would have been more precisely, definitely, and exclusively appropriate to the immediate occasion.

But this is no reason why we should decline to profit by the instruction which Scripture has provided for us. We have no ground for assuming that our Lord's words are to have their scope and meaning circumscribed within limits which the occasion of their utterance may seem to have traced out. On the contrary, we know it was His habit to reply to some question, or to comment on some expression of, perhaps, trivial and ephemeral interest, by enunciating a great principle, of universal application. We know, that in various instances His language was misunderstood by hearers, to whom the occasion, or the circumstances, or their own "slowness of

heart," inadequately interpreted the spiritual truth He would impart to them. And we know that His expressions, in various instances, were voices of thoughts within His own mind, unknown to His disciples, and in which they could not be sharers: why may not the words spoken at the marriage festival at Cana, be numbered among such self-communings?

When the Lord Jesus warned His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees"—when He instructed them that He had "meat to eat which they knew not of"—when, declaring that He would raise up a fallen temple, "He spake of the temple of His body"—the sense in which His words were understood, although natural and pertinent to the occasion, was wholly inadequate to the true meaning of His expressions. In His notice* of the communication made by the Seventy, when they returned to Him with joy, as well as in His affecting apostrophe† to impenitent Jerusalem, He gave utterance to thoughts that arose within Him as He communed with the remote past;—is it incredible that in Cana of Galilee His mind may have been projected into a future, which was at hand; and that the subject of His anticipations may have been partially disclosed in His expressions? When He said to His mother, in the temple, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business," we are instructed, "they understood not the saying that He spake unto them"—why, then, should we interpret His expressions at the marriage feast, by the construction which, it is possible, Mary may have put upon them; why limit their scope and bearing within the bounds of her expectations? It is undoubtedly expedient, that, in

* St. Luke x. 18.

† St. Matt. xxiii. 34.

our endeavour to understand the Lord's words, we pay due regard to the incidents and circumstances of the occasion on which they were spoken ; but it is also meet that we regard such accessories in their own order, and do not suffer them to debar us from availing ourselves of other helps with which Holy Scripture providentially supplies us.

Let us consider, then, the occasion on which our Lord spake the words in my text, and judge whether it dictates an interpretation of them, different from what may be gleaned in corresponding, or parallel, passages of Holy Scripture.

The Lord Jesus—seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head—comes from His first victory over Satan. He has been saluted by the Baptist, "Lamb of God," "Son of God," "Who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost"—titles which shadow forth the death for sin, the resurrection and ascension. He has declared Himself the Mediator through whom the vision of old was to be realised, heaven opened, earth and heaven reconciled ; and, immediately after this revelation, He is represented as gracing, with His presence and first miracle, that holy estate, which He restored to its original purity, and in the elevation of which, He reinstated woman in her primeval equality. Against her, especially, Satan had prevailed ; upon her the consequences of the fall were more heavily visited ; but her seed was to prevail over the tempter, she should "be saved in child-bearing," and the Lord's first marvellous manifestation of His glory is appropriately vouchsafed to adorn the holy estate in which the dignity of woman is, to so great an extent, acknowledged and assured.

But He is not alone "seed of the woman," and vic-

torious over her enemy; He is to be considered in another relation also. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." It is not irrational to believe that these words of the Baptist may testify to his having learned from reports, that, at the marriage feast, the Lord had supplied the deficiency, against which it was the bridegroom's part to make provision; but it would seem very irrational not to believe that such a festival naturally suggested to the Lord thoughts of the time when the mystery of His bridal should be accomplished. His bride was the Church of the living God; for this, such was His love, He gave himself, purchasing it "by His own blood." Is it conceivable, that such a bride and such a bridal could be absent from the thoughts of the august Bridegroom, on an occasion so strongly suggestive of them? No: feeble, and uncertain, and slow, as are our mental conceptions, we would say that the dread glories of the hour to come, must then have been upon His spirit. The circle around were engrossed in the incidents and cares of the moment and the place; the conversation of Jesus was, appropriately, with the future; His spirit was in the awful and glorious hour of that redeeming bridal, in which the Bridegroom's inestimable offering was to be His precious blood-shedding and death; and when a mortal voice called His attention to the humble necessities of the feast, the words of His reply may naturally belong rather to the disturbed vision from which His mother awoke Him, than to the difficulty in which she seems to have sought His succour.

If such be the application of our Lord's words (and, remember, this is no more than to interpret the expression which constitutes my text, in the same sense in which it is to be understood in so many other passages

of Holy Scripture), the miracle to which they served as a preface will be found in apt correspondence with them; the work, as well as the prefatory word, issuing from a spirit which impressed upon both its anticipation of the future.

The name given to the miracle wrought by our Lord on this occasion, you are aware, is, in the original, that of "sign." We meet with various appellations of miraculous acts in Holy Scripture, which, although they concur in a common idea, and admit of being translated by the same word, yet retain, each, an instructive peculiarity. Thus, one of them would direct the mind to thoughts of the mighty power in which a work has been wrought; one to the effect produced on the minds of those who were given to witness it; and one to the significancy of the marvel, as having relation, perhaps, to something shown or foreshown, but not completed, in the act to which the name is given. Of this last description was the miracle wrought at Cana of Galilee. It was a *sign* given by Him who said on the occasion, "Mine hour is not yet come." Was it significant of something by which that hour, when it came, was to be characterised?

"And there were set there six waterpots, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins a-piece.

"Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them to the brim.

"And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bear it."*

Such is the recital of this "beginning of miracles," at once a mighty work and a sign, and therefore to be re-

* St. John ii. 6.

garded not alone because of the power in which it was wrought, but also for its significancy. Vessels, "after the manner of the purifying of the Jews," are filled with water, which is changed by miracle into wine. Water, the outward sign in baptism, is transfigured into one of the outward signs in the eucharist, and He that was the living bread which came down from heaven, commands the wondrous transformation. This was done when the hour of the Lord was in the thoughts of the Redeemer, but was not actually present.

When Jesus knew that His hour was come, a careful disposition of the Gospel narratives will show that, between the celebration of the legal Passover, and the institution of the Christian, a use of water was interposed, in which, if the Lord taught His disciples a lesson of humility, never to be forgotten, He taught them, also, the necessity of that cleansing, of which He appointed water to be the outward and visible sign. "If I wash thee not thou hast no part in me." So spake He, on that solemn occasion, when He washed His disciples' feet with water, and when He declared wine the type and outward sign in which they were spiritually to drink His atoning blood.

Further on, as this great hour deepens in its all-absorbing interest, another phenomenon presents itself, and with it another marvellous correspondence. When the agony was overpast, and the ransom paid, and the victory won—when Jesus was dead already,* one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.

"And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe."

* St. John xix. 34.

In this phenomenon a series seems completed. If sacraments were foreshown by anticipation at the marriage in Cana, when the hour of the Lord Jesus was yet distant, they were adopted and instituted when He knew that His hour "was come;" and were bequeathed, it may be said, in that crisis of the hour, in which, by death, the Saviour destroyed him that had the power of death, and in the water and the blood proclaimed His victory.

Surely all is coherent in this chain of sign or testimony. Anticipating His "hour" in thought, the Lord Jesus wrought the great sign of which water and wine were the material and the result.

"When He knew that His hour was come," He spiritualised the physical substances, appointing water to be the sign of a cleansing from sin—wine, a type of the blood shed for the redemption of the world.

And when His hour had reached the moment in which the agony was overpast and the victory won, then was the scheme of sacramental evidences complete—He who gave signs of His love at the marriage and the Passover, revealed them in a still more affecting form from the Cross. In these last symbols, He who was the second Adam—the true Bridegroom—realised (as eminent worthies of the early church have exultingly proclaimed) the history of which that of our first parent was a figure. The death of the second Adam was, in their judgment, an antitype to the sleep of the first, and, as Eve came forth, while he slept, from him in whom all die, so, from the opened side of Him in whom all shall be made alive, while He slept the sleep of the Cross, came forth His virgin bride, the Church, in her twin sacraments of the water and the blood.

Thus, from the beginning of His miracles to His payment of the ransom for sin, the chain of evidence and sign is coherent and conclusive. All testifies that "this is He who came by water and blood, even Jesus"—whose name was given "because He should save His people from their sins"—and in whom, appropriately, symbols of sanctification and redemption are met together.

And now we may ask whether it was not natural, that He, in whose own bridal so great a mystery was accomplished, should be wrapt in the thought of it, when He was solicited, at a marriage festival, to work His beginning of miracles? What more natural than that, when apprised of a want which it was, on all occasions, the bridegroom's part to supply, He should answer as one whose mind was projected, by anticipation, into the time when He himself should pour out His life, as a marriage offering, for the redemption of His bride, the Church?

If this be natural, and if, according to an acknowledged principle of interpretation, we explain our Lord's words in conformity with many parallel passages in the Gospel where they are recorded, we, surely, may admit that the hour which, He said, was not yet come, represented (not an hour *which was come*, that in which He supplied the want experienced at the feast, or in which He commenced His public course of public miracles, but) the glorious season in which He achieved the redemption of man, solemnised His bridal with the Church, and "departed from this world unto the Father."

How constantly this hour was present to the Saviour's thoughts—although you do not need to receive instruction, it is not unmeet that you should be reminded. No condition or circumstance of His life on earth concealed

it from Him. It was proclaimed in the testimony of the Baptist, on each of the two occasions when he declared Him the "Lamb of God." Its influence was upon the Transfiguration, when the subject of His discourse with Moses and Elias was "His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem;" it was a theme on which He loved to instruct disciples "slow of heart," and to persuade them that He ought "to suffer such things, and to ascend into His glory." Thus may we understand that over our Lord's whole life on earth, thoughts of the hour when He should go hence presided.

Are we followers of Him in entertaining the thought which His practice commends to us, and which we should therefore account precious? If we be faithful followers of the Saviour, the hour which was His is one which we, too, share in. All whom He hath won by His victory—all whom, by the great offering once made, He hath ransomed, have participation in the precious privileges of that glorious hour. Is it our wont to think of Christ thus dying for us?—to meditate, seriously and oft, on His cross and bitter passion?

Oh! you who are yet inexperienced in the power of patient and pious meditation on this great theme, deny it to your souls no longer. In what circumstance or state of being soever you find yourself placed, there will be good for you in the remembrance of the hour in which Christ, "lifted up to die," accomplished the glory of redemption. If you are elated by worldly success—or agitated by ambition—or depressed by sorrow—or tempted by the seductions of sense—in your affliction and your joy, be it the habit of your soul to remember the Man of Sorrows, and the Cross He died upon; so shall the fascinations of this life present be subdued by the shadow

which faith draws down upon them—so shall there be refuge, and support, and comfort for the sorest tribulation, in that stupendous sacrifice in which God commends to us His love.

And there is another hour of which it befits us, after the same example, to have oftentimes a devout and solemn remembrance—the hour in which we shall depart from the world—which we cannot seriously reflect upon without an earnest prayer, that in it we shall have an advocate with the Father. We ought to esteem it ours, for, unless we except the present hour—the fugitive present, ever passing away—we have no certainty of any other. Let it be associated in our minds with the hour in which the offering for sin was made and accepted. Even to the Lord himself there may have been salutary influence in the thought that the hour was coming when He should depart out of this world unto the Father. When the people would take Him by force, and make Him a king—when the multitude cried out, “Not this man, but Barabbas”—when the disciple betrayed his Master by a kiss—it may have been that the thought which was habitual to the Saviour, had its part in protecting the holy composure of spirit in which He suffered. He had taken our nature upon Him with its tenderesses, although without sin; and when we read of angels ministering to Him, and strengthening Him, we may believe that He did not deny unto himself the efficacy of heavenly thoughts.

But whatever part we may assign to such thoughts in their influence on the Lord's feelings and life, that He entertained them has been written for our example. *We* need them. They are indispensable to the good living of creatures over whom the power of the present

is so formidable. He that would *live holily*, should have much commerce with the thought of a *holy death*. Let us, then, keep in oft-renewed remembrance the hour in which we must depart hence, and ever think of it, not as the hour in which we must lie down in the dust, but in which we are to go forth from the prison, or the shelter, of a mortal body, and to appear before the Father of spirits.

LECTURE II.

ST. JOHN xli., part of ver. 23.

"And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come."

MEMORABLE incidents, harbingers, or circumstances, of the Lord's hour, have been recorded by the Evangelists. Rulers had taken "counsel together for to put Jesus to death." Satan had "put it into the heart of Judas" to betray Him. Caiaphas, not of himself, but being High Priest that year, had prophesied "that He should die for the people." Multitudes of those who came to the feast—so great in number that the Pharisees said, "the world is gone after Him"—thronged forth to welcome Him with hosannas, by which, prophecy had foreshown, Messiah should be greeted. And into the exultation of this national rejoicing there penetrated, at length, a timid and alien voice, confession of the stranger, prophetic of the time when those who were afar off should be made near "through the blood of the Cross"—when there should be no more bond or free, Scythian or barbarian, but all should be one in Christ Jesus. Then the Mediator of the New Testament "knew that His hour was come."

"His hour!"—His eventful hour! In the portion of

time thus designated, the Captain of our Salvation was made perfect through suffering, and the High Priest of our calling made atonement for sin;—in this portion of time, Jesus redeemed a world, and instituted a ministry of reconciliation—raised up His temple—ordained His temple-service, and showed the promised sign which was to avouch His sovereign authority. A portion of time like this, in which the ministration of death had life given to it, and brightened into the ministration of the Spirit, is aptly distinguished by a name of honor. It is emphatically the hour of the Redeemer. It had its commencement on that day when, amid hosannas to the Son of David, the Lord Jesus was welcomed to Jerusalem, Israel's King. At its close, adoring angels beheld the Son of Man enter, King of Glory, into heaven; and worshipping disciples on earth were filled with the Holy Ghost, and “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

If we consider the history of this, “the hour” of redemption, apart from other subjects of the divine narrative in which it is contained, we shall find it naturally and meetly divided into three momentous periods—the first, closing in our blessed Saviour's death—the second, in His ascension—the third, in the day of Pentecost. In the first of these periods, our Lord ordained those testamentary memorials, the pledges of His love—endured the agony and passion, and “humbled” himself to the death upon the Cross. In the second, we find the many infallible proofs of His resurrection, and in them proofs that He had, righteously, assumed the offices of salvation and judgment. In the third period of this majestic history, the High Priest of our calling entered into the Holiest of all, bearing with

c

Him the glorified humanity in which He suffered — sending down to His disciples on earth the promised Comforter. Let us trace, in brief outline, these eventful periods.

The sufferings endured by our Lord in the first portion of His hour, were of two descriptions. In one, the agency of the grief is hidden from us, and it is in its effects we are admonished of its fearful intensity. In the other, the character and circumstances of the sorrows are described, their extreme severity rendered plainly intelligible, and the sublime patience made known to us which they were unable to overcome or discompose. To this latter class belongs the narrative of the betrayal, the judgment, and the death of our Lord :—to the former, His agony in the garden.

What know we of this mysterious trial? From the words of our Lord himself, recorded by one Evangelist, we learn that His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. In the narrative of another Evangelist, we are instructed that He began to be “sore amazed.” A third instructs us, that, “being in an agony, He prayed the more earnestly, and that His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” What the processes were which caused tribulation like this, we are not instructed. No human eye looked upon them—God has not revealed them for our learning. While the Lord was in an agony, the disciples whom He repeatedly enjoined to watch with Him, were overcome with slumber. While they slept, an angel from heaven appeared unto Him, strengthening Him. This much we learn with authority from Holy Scripture. May we learn something more as matter of just or probable inference?

The word "agony" is found but once in the New Testament; but once, perhaps, in the canonical Scriptures. It is not unmeet that an unexampled sorrow shall have a peculiar name. But the name, as its construction intimates, seems to imply more than sorrow. It suggests ideas of antagonism also,—antagonism, it may be, of warring thoughts—antagonism, it may be, of personal competitors; and it suggests, moreover, the prospect of a prize, which abides the issue of the conflict.

In the Scriptural narrative there is nothing to forbid the thought that our Lord, when "in an agony," was conflicting with an adversary. There is much by which such a thought seems countenanced, if not confirmed. Before the Saviour's public mission commenced, He was led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and when the vanquished tempter departed, it was but for a season, or, as some have interpreted the passage, "until the season." The temptation, therefore, in the wilderness, was not to be the only conflict with Satan in which the Lord should engage, and His intimation to the disciples, "the prince of this world cometh," may denote that the final struggle was then at hand. He who was present at the Paschal feast, in the heart of Judas, may have been making ready to tempt the Saviour again.

Thus, were we permitted to indulge in deductions from the language of Holy Scripture, we could infer, that, when our Lord was in an agony, there was a contest waged, in which the antagonists were the Saviour and the destroyer, and which proposed, as the object or prize of the antagonism, this world, with all its human inhabitants.

If such a contest be imagined, and if we strive to picture to ourselves the agencies through which the enemy of souls sought to prevail, there may be found in Scripture, for daring and uncertain thoughts, something by which they will be guided.

In his temptation in the wilderness, Satan endeavoured to awaken ambition in the Lord, by showing Him the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. May there not have been dread correspondence between this vision of splendour, and "sights of woe" displayed in the garden? He had shown the kingdoms of the world in their glory. He may now have exhibited them in ruin. If Jesus had accepted the office he would have assigned Him, and bowed to be his minister, the world was at His disposal to govern, and keep it in the state in which it was found at His coming. His rejection of the offer would bring down upon earth affliction which He might have averted. The display of this affliction may have been Satan's device in the agony in the garden. The prince of the powers of the air knows how potent is the influence over human will of those accessories that address themselves to the imagination and the senses. He was not satisfied to offer the kingdoms of the world to our Lord in the wilderness—he *showed* them brightening in their glory. In the garden he may have shown them in the state to which his malice could subdue them:—no light upon them, no spectacles disclosed in them, but of the baleful regions where the fire is never extinguished. In the wilderness, he had shown the kingdoms of a world against which he had prevailed. In the garden, he may have shown the world to which he was condemned; and the vision which so moved the Lord, may have been

that of hell, converting this world into its own dread likeness, and absorbing into its inextinguishable fires multitudes of lost souls, to whom offers of mercy, not embraced, were to prove but aggravation of guilt and punishment.

Would it not seem as if the treason of Judas, and the trouble it caused to our blessed Lord, countenanced such inferences as these? Jesus knew who should betray Him, and the thought, it is written for our learning, lay heavily on His spirit. It was with Him when He instructed* His disciples—its power was upon Him† when He kept the Passover—it was with Him even when He was alone‡ with God in prayer; and, we are instructed, it burned in the heart of the prophet§ and king by whom, in the ancient day, Jesus was typified. If, by making one soul his victim, Satan could cause this trouble to the Lord, what success might he hope for, were he to display, openly, in all their horrors, his regions of eternal anguish and despair, and show millions, even among those who were to call themselves by the name of Jesus, suffering torments in them? Thus would the evil spirit's scheme of antagonism be consistent throughout, beginning in his corruption of one disciple—ending with a display of the myriads prevailed against in times past, to be won in the future, and of the baleful regions where they were to dwell for ever in "tortures without end."

If such appalling vision were displayed, it was mercy to the two disciples that they were spared from looking upon it. Heart of man could not endure so dire a

* St. John vi. 70.

† St. John xiii. 21.

‡ St. John xvii. 12.

§ Acts i. 16-20.

spectacle. It is true, the Lord enjoined them to watch. He would not have denied them the protection of slumber, if their waking eyes were to behold horrors too fearful for reason of man to sustain. But there may have been incidents in this fearful conflict more terrible than His darkest anticipations. An Evangelist instructs us that He began to be sore amazed; and, thus informed, we can imagine that there are resources of malignity which Christ, in His humanity, had not explored, until He felt their agonising power, and prevailed over them.

Whatever truth there may be in such conjectures or deductions as I have laid before you, and however permissible to form them, there is an inference to which the Gospel narrative points more directly. Our Lord's suffering in the garden is recorded in Scripture *for us*—*the character and circumstances* of His sufferings seem to have been disclosed to beings of an order different from ours. The slumber of the Lord's disciples, whom He besought to watch—the wakeful ministration of an angel who appeared from heaven strengthening Him—heaven wakeful while the earth slept—are assuredly fraught with such instruction.

Redemption, it has been said, is a scheme imperfectly comprehended. Wrought in this world, it may have vindicated God's justice and mercy throughout the universe; and therefore, incidents, which, judged by us, might appear inexplicable or superfluous, because they pass man's understanding, may have been of essential moment, and may seem ordered aright by unerring wisdom, when considered as parts of the great scheme to which they belong, and as disclosed to beings capable of comprehending them. Of truths like these, the Lord

Jesus in an agony, the slumbering disciples, and the ministering angel, may naturally remind us.

There may be further instruction for us—instruction full of encouragement and comfort. The prayer of our blessed Saviour, in the hour of His agony, at first was a prayer of supplication—"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It became a prayer of resignation.—"If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done." He was heard, the Apostle writes, in that He prayed. There are two forms in which supplicants have the blessing to feel that their prayers are heard. They may be delivered from the affliction they fear—they may be divinely strengthened to endure it. Our Lord's prayer, when, a second time, He addresses the Father, is the voice of One who is endowed with power to bear the sorrow laid upon Him. The angel appearing to Him from heaven, strengthening Him, may have been the messenger commissioned to impart the strength needed in the emergencies of the conflict. He desired, it may have been, the comfort which might have been found in the presence and sympathy of faithful disciples. It was denied Him. Some friends were afar off—those who were near Him slumbered. Darkness and desertion were His portion upon the earth. Strength came to Him from heaven. So it was when Christ was the sufferer—so shall they fare who, in their sufferings, strive to walk in the paths which He has trodden.

True, you will not, when you pray, look upon angelic forms sent down to comfort you. Such manifestation was given to Him through whom our prayers are accepted—to the Intercessor who could look upon angelic visitants, and feel no perilous disturbance at the vision. Enough for us to have such assurance that our Inter-

cessor was heard, and to have—as in many instances we have—a witness in our heart and soul, that the prayer which goeth not forth from feigned lips, brings peace or strength to the penitent and believing heart from which it issues forth to heaven, and to which heaven has imparted it.

While in some form, and through some agency of undisclosed horror, the agony in the garden was prolonged, Satan, in the person of Judas, was conspiring with the priests what should follow after that dread struggle was overpast. Until the Lord was victor, He was not betrayed into the hands of sinners. Twice, during the mysterious agony, He besought the chosen disciples to watch; and, willing as their spirits were, there was a power exerted upon their bodily organs, which weighed them down in stupor. His third address to them is, “Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” How dreadful must the influences of the agony have been, from which—as even from the tenor of this address we might imagine—the sufferings in the judgment-hall and on Calvary were a deliverance and relief! How strong the patience of redeeming love, which the coming extremity of anguish had no power to conquer or disturb! Deserted—betrayed—alone—the crown of thorns—the royal robe, in mockery and torment flung round a lacerated form—hosts of the fallen and the lost arrayed against Him—a world’s sins and sorrows heavy upon His soul—injuries—insults—all that can hurt the body, and afflict a sensitive spirit, but serve to show forth more affectingly the majesty of a patience which love and mercy sustain. From the Cross, as from the repose of a peaceful home, He

makes provision for loved ones left behind. From the Cross, as priest before the altar, He intercedes for sinners, even for those who despitefully used and entreated Him. From the Cross, as priest upon his throne, with royal clemency He takes a suppliant to His favor. And from the Cross, when His lips can move no more in promise or prayer—even when He had bowed His head, and given up the ghost, He sends a message of peace and hope to the world for which He suffered; and, in the water and the blood streaming through His opened side, preaches to all believers the glad tidings of sanctification and redemption.

When, after the resurrection, He appears to the disciples again, all power is given to Him. The world is to have the blessing of it. Nations which were afar off, are made near “through the blood of His Cross;” they are to be received under His rule by the confession of His baptism. Forty days, after He has arisen from the grave, He delays His departure from the world, that He may confirm the faith of His apostles, by many infallible proofs. And their faith was confirmed. On the first day when He arose from the dead, while yet despondence was upon the spirits of His disciples, they said, in their heaviness of soul, “We thought that it was He which should redeem Israel.” Forty days, of frequent and comforting intercourse with the Lord, have gone by, and, as they stand with Him on the Mount of Ascension, their last words, spoken in altered spirit, are—“Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” In the apostles, as in the people they may be said to represent, hope for the prosperity of Israel seems inseparable from faith in the Messiah.

But, yet, when the Lord was withdrawn, they did

not relapse into the despondence from which apparitions of the risen Jesus had aroused them. "What, and if ye see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before"—so the Lord had once spoken unto them. They did witness His majestic ascension, and, we are instructed, they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Is their holy cheer intelligible in the words spoken on the Mount of Ascension, in the moment of separation from their Lord?—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Such were the words that startled the silence in which the Apostles stood, with upturned faces, when a cloud received their Master out of their sight. It was after hearing them they returned, with great joy, to the city they so dearly loved. They believed that the Lord would come again.

Thus closed the second division of the Lord's hour. The termination of the third was on the day of Pentecost. A copious history of the intervening time has not been vouchsafed to us. The scriptural narrative directs our attention to the number of the days, compelling us, as it were, to observe that during forty He was seen of the disciples, to whom He showed himself alive by many infallible proofs, and that between the last of those days, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, there was an interval, unilluminated by any recorded apparition.

It is not, it cannot be, without purpose, that the Scripture has directed our attention on this undiversified interval. The pause of expectation during those ten days may have been designed to exercise our thoughts, and to instruct us. Where was Christ in that interval between the moment when His parting words were spoken, and

that in which His entrance into the Holiest of all, was proclaimed on earth by the descent of the Holy Spirit?

This solemn pause, we have been instructed, may testify to the great truth that Christ bore with Him a body into heaven; or may be designed to bring that thought to our remembrance. The ascension of our Lord to the Father, far above all heavens, may have demanded time. A body had been prepared for Him—a body He bare with Him when entering, with His glorified humanity, into heaven; and in the notice of those ten days in which He was withdrawn from the eyes of His disciples, the inspired narrative may have been ordered to make provision for our understanding that the laws which are applicable to material being in its most sublimated essence, are not at variance with it. Had the ascension of the Lord and the descent of the Holy Spirit been simultaneous, it might have been argued that both were, alike, purely spiritual operations, or that, in one, the laws of being were violated. The narrative, as divinely written for our learning, leaves no scope or excuse for such perplexing subtleties of reasoning. Forty days after the resurrection were given to His disciples on earth—ten, in which He was withdrawn from earth, may have been passed, in condescension to the laws of nature, in His progress to the Holy Place, and may have made Him manifest to successive orders of high intelligences. “His transit from the cloud to the throne may have been but one continued passage, in long triumphal pomp, through powers and principalities made subject. The only-begotten Son may have then again been brought into the world, not by a new nativity, but, as it were, by proclamation and in-

vestiture, while the universe beheld its God, and all the angels worshipped Him."

These are the words and the thoughts of one* educated and justly honored in this seat of learning, one, who holds it a privilege and a delight to present intellectual treasures as an offering to Him who gave them, and who, acknowledged as an interpreter of nature and her laws, would modestly adduce their testimony when it may, in its own order, explain difficulties in the written Word of God. "And would not such a triumphal progress," he asks, "harmonise well with that Psalm which has always been referred in an especial manner to the ascension, and which speaks of the everlasting gates as lifting up their heads, that the King of Glory might come in?"

Thus interpreted, we may have the history of the third epoch of our blessed Saviour's hour, in brief epitome. Forty days the Lord tarried here below, that His apostles might have infallible proofs of the great truth they were to testify to the world. During the ten days in which they saw Him not, He may have been proclaimed the King of Glory to successive orders of created intelligences. On the fiftieth day, it may be, He entered into the Holy Place; and, in the same moment that there arose joy in heaven, as the Son of Man, retaining His humanity, was enthroned at the right hand of Power—earth, also, had its marvel of grace and glory, when cloven tongues of fire rested on the brows of the astonished apostles, and twelve poor fishermen were endowed with power from on high to evangelise the world.

Thus does the memorable division of that interval

* Sir Wm. R. Hamilton, Astronomer Royal.

between Pentecost and the Resurrection take its place among the instructive incidents in which God makes merciful provision to approve His truth to the reason of man, and even to afford scope and sphere for a legitimate and salutary exercise of imagination.

In the memorials of that portion of time which is named "the hour" of the Redeemer—"that hour in which He departed out of this world unto the Father," we seem admonished to meditate upon the day, great and very terrible, in which He shall come down from the Father, to judge and to rule the world. In like manner as He was seen going up to heaven, so shall He come. In a glorified humanity He went up; in the same shall He return. But there are to be other demonstrations of glory. The dead in Christ shall arise at His coming; the faithful who are alive shall be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. He shall come with ten thousand of His saints. He shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power. If we may entertain the thought that as He went up on high, successive orders of heavenly intelligences received Him as their King, we seem to have authority for understanding, in what we learn of the glorious train attendant on Him, that as He descends from the throne in heaven, to sit upon the throne of David, each sphere of glorified creatures sends out its habitants to swell the train of the mighty Lord, and to be present when He assumes the subordinate dominion of the world. What a scene is before them—before our thoughts!—the dead in Christ coming forth from their graves—living believers in Christ becoming changed into His likeness—the arisen and the living caught up into the air, to meet Him—"the elements melting with fervent heat, when the earth also, and

the works that are therein shall be burned up"—and Christ, and His ransomed host, and His attendant angels, descending to the judgment.

My younger brethren, as I conclude, let me crave your entertainment of a thought which our subject suggests, and which is not unmeet for the days we live in. You will sometimes hear it urged as a complaint against the service of the Catholic Church in which we worship, that it is unprovided with those agencies by which the imagination can be engaged and interested. You will hear this complaint more perilously urged because accompanied by expressions of respect and love on the part of some who acknowledge our devotional services to be scriptural and sober, but who, at the same time, censure them for declining to adopt those accessories of worship by which, in other systems, the imaginative faculties are solicited. This is no light complaint, if there be just ground for it. The imaginative faculties constitute an essential element in our constitution. No permanent greatness, perhaps, has been attained, in which the imagination has not had its part; and so long as this great power observes its due place to assist and obey, it is, as it has been styled, a help-meet for the more masculine faculty of reason. It becomes perilous only when it usurps dominion. The service of our Church would be culpably defective if it contained nothing to exercise or educate the imagination.

But they who make the objection know not what they say. The Law and the Prophets—the Evangelists—the Psalms—the Epistles—constituting so large a portion of our Liturgy—imparting light and life to all—how can objectors say that it has no power to influence imagination, and that we should borrow from the

heathen, as another Church has borrowed, to supply our deficiency? In the dimness of disastrous eclipse, when God's great revelation is obscured, men may have recourse to human contrivances—lights that lead astray; but to accuse the scriptural service of our Church as powerless over the imagination! With more justice might the admirer of some poor gaud or toy devised by man make the same complaint against the Apennines or Alps, because the magnificence of their mountain scenery is of God's own creation.

They know not what they say, who impute such poverty to our Church service. Imagination is accessible to various and opposite influences. Soul may arouse—sense may enthrall it—and it will take the complexion, and assimilate itself to the nature, of the power by which it is swayed. It may be excited by scenic illusions, and, so called into action, may squander its treasures on fugitive and unprofitable emotions. It may be quickened by the words of everlasting life, and associated with thoughts, and purposes, and principles, of which the influence shall be edifying and durable. Where the contrivances which move imagination are of mere human device, their effect at the best will be uncertain, and will frequently become pernicious—it will be as the offering strange fire before the Lord. Where sources of imaginative interest are found in God's own Word, as they are in our scriptural worship, however expedient it is that a devotional service shall be meetly ordered, no garish auxiliaries of lights, and melodies, and censer's breath, can be necessary.

LECTURE III.

ST. MATTHEW xxvi. 27, 28.

“And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a sign, as well as a mean, of grace—an instrument to convey good to the soul of a man, and to disclose a great truth to his understanding. It is the Lord's exposition of His death as a sacrifice for sin, and it is a mean whereby beneficial influences from that sacrifice penetrate the souls of faithful communicants. To trace the processes by which these benefits are imparted, may necessarily transcend human thought ; and, in reflecting on them, our wisdom will be, as an eminent father* in the Church has said, “to rest ourselves altogether upon the strength of His glorious power, who is able and will bring to pass, that the bread and cup which He giveth us shall be truly the thing He promiseth.” Regarding the Sacrament under the other aspect, our duty is different ; and to explore and meditate upon the revelations made to the faculties of our understanding, and to our chastened affections, in the divinely-appointed memorials of

* Hooker.

our Lord's death, may be not only an admissible exercise of thought, but may be among the approved agencies by which God will work good within us.

In the exercise of this power, however, there is need of much circumspection. The thoughts and imaginings of the human heart should be so governed that they abide within their own province, and dare not to mingle irreverently with the divine revelations. There is an intellectual impatience in man (the more restless and eager, perhaps, in proportion as the faculties are loftier and more energetic) to bring mysterious truths within the range and limits of the understanding. The question, Why is this?—what does this mean?—often startles the minds of gifted men, before the whole counsel of God on the subject of inquiry has had time to disclose itself; and, in many an instance, responses, of which human genius is the prolific source, have pre-occupied the judgment against that answer, of authority, which God had provided in His Word.

To receive the wisdom of revelation, therefore, you must prepare for it, in the first instance, by denying yourself, and placing strong restraint on your imagination. You must subdue your mental being, by God's blessing, into a state of devout attention, passive, but not inert, in which a governing energy suppresses every disquieting impulse or emotion, and the yielded and patient faculties receive impressions from revealed truth with the distinctness and fidelity in which hues and forms of earth and heaven reproduce themselves, when no disturbing influences are abroad, on some expanse of motionless water.

May God so dispose our hearts and minds that we shall receive, thus unadulterated, the instructions vouch-

D

safed in His Word, and that we shall learn to apprehend truly the wisdom commended to us in the memorials of the Lord's death. They are not, we may readily admit, the memorials which human faculties would have devised. Were man the contriver, sense and imagination would have impressed their character upon them. A symbolism which interprets that precious bloodshedding to the understanding and the spirit, is of holier origin, and is rich in subjects of more reverent meditation.

The Scriptures in which the institution of the blessed Eucharist is directly narrated, are, as you all know, three of the Gospels, and an Epistle of the Apostle Paul. St. John, who declares that many signs "done by Jesus in the presence of His disciples are not written in this book," and who says, "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, *I suppose** that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written," may be considered as thus explaining, if explanation were necessary, why he also was not a historian of the eucharistic institution. Writing when the sacramental observance was general throughout the whole church, unless there were something to be added to the accounts already known, his narrative would be superfluous. The absence of such a narrative from the Gospel according to St. John instructs us, that the histories previously given to the church were complete; while, at the same time, there are to be found in this Gospel, topics, collateral and illustrative, which are characteristic

* "I suppose," an expression proper to the individual rather than the organ of inspiration.

of the Evangelist himself, and confirmatory of the more direct narrative of the other Evangelists with which they correspond.

There may be other reasons, also, for the peculiarity in the Gospel according to St. John. The Evangelist, in his abstinence or omission, may have been guided, unconsciously, to make provision for states and circumstances not unusual in the progress of Christ's religion. In the spread of the everlasting Gospel, where the field assigned to it is the world, there must be many an instance in which penitent and believing hearts, precluded by insurmountable difficulties from participating in the memorials of the Lord's death, feel a longing desire to be partakers in them; and there may be solace and instruction divinely appointed for such disquiet, in the knowledge, that, in a Gospel record which does not formally relate the institution of this Holy Sacrament, words of everlasting life with which it was graced, not found elsewhere, are carefully recorded. Troubled spirits may learn from this, that although participation in the sacramental pledges of a Saviour's love is denied, the believer who remembers the words of Him by whom those holy mysteries were instituted and ordained, can never feel destitute or forsaken.

Thus, it may be, the evangelic records have wisdom for us, where they are silent as well as in their express revelations, and thus are we admonished to be the more circumspect and earnest in our desire that the instructions with which they are divinely fraught may not pass from us unheeded. Let us seek, in a spirit of prayer the wisdom they offer in our Lord's holy institution.

And first, it is not unmeet that we remember what has been declared respecting *the time at which the Lord*

instituted the memorials of His death. It was, as we collect from the Gospel according to St. John, in that season which is called especially "the hour" of the Lord Jesus, and when He knew that His hour was come. It was, as has been commended to us by the Apostle Paul, on the same night in which He was betrayed; and (as we learn from the Evangelists St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke) on the occasion when He and His apostles were assembled to keep the Passover of the Jewish law. Upon each of these solemn characteristics the Holy Scriptures direct our earnest attention.

"The hour" of the Lord was come—that hour in which He should achieve the redemption of fallen man, and re-assume the glory He had with the Father before the world was—ransoming from sin by His bitter death and passion—brightening the grave with the glory of His resurrection—bearing with Him into heaven the first-fruits of restored humanity, and sending down upon earth the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. Such were the glories by which the hour of the Redeemer was illuminated; and, foremost in the august procession, He advanced those holy mysteries, pledges of His love, symbols instinct with this truth of mighty power—that in every good thing won by the victories and sufferings and merits of a crucified Saviour, whosoever believeth in Him hath an interest.

For the glory of the Redeemer was not to be that which "abideth alone"—a dread majesty, which, in its solitary and insufferable splendor, interdicts communion. Love was to be the agent in the Lord's sovereignty: good the end of it. Earthly ambition suffers and dares, that it may dwell apart from the ways of men, above, conspicuous, unapproachable. The glory of the Re-

deemer—Son of Man—only-begotten Son of God—was to have its benign and merciful completion in the imparting of its felicity—in the making man participator in the joy and blessedness of his Lord—and in the marvel and mystery of a condescension which stoops to the acceptance of a state of being in which man can be made capable of participating. The institution of those pledges of love, memorials of the Lord's death, and disclosing to man his part in it, was aptly reserved for this hour of redemption.

They were instituted in the same night in which He was betrayed. So we learn through the Apostle Paul. Thus, many have observed, the love of the Redeemer for those whom He came to save, is set forth and magnified as by the force of comparison and contrast. In that night, when all the powers of evil were combined against Him, and agony beyond the range of human imagination to conceive awaiting Him, nigh even at the door, His thoughts were given to the institution of an ordinance through which, in all time to come, penitent and faithful hearts should have assurance that He careth for them. This was love. To be able to say in such a night, with all knowledge of what He was to endure—"With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer"—to have relief from thoughts of such agony now at hand in the remission of sin it was to purchase—this was love; and the contrast suggested by the apostle commends it to our spirit and affections.

Many a timid heart, subdued in a sense of sin and weakness, may find comfort in this thought, and many a careless spirit may be warned by it. In that night on which He was betrayed, all who partook of His holy

Sacrament were weak—a sinful nature, it may be said, lingered in all; in one only there was intention to sin—one, only, perished. The sin that is lamented and struggled against—the weakness that desires to be changed into strength, prohibits not the penitent believer from the Lord's table. Only that leaven of iniquity—sin acquiesced in or purposed—profanes the holy rite, and brings down a dread visitation. In the night on which He was betrayed, all who drank of His cup forsook Him—one denied—all but the betrayer were spared.

But the words of the apostle suggest other thoughts, not unmeet to be remembered. "On the same night in which He was betrayed." Why was He betrayed on the night of this holy solemnity? The rulers who desired that He should be betrayed to them said, "Not on the feast day." Why was their purpose overruled, and the treason against our blessed Lord completed at the time to which they made objection? * Is the answer to be learned in the mandate addressed by the Saviour to him whom Satan had made his own—"That thou doest, do quickly?" Is this the explanation? Are we instructed to observe it? Was the power of Jesus ascendant over the lost sinner? He had solicited him by that touching condescension in which He ministered to the disciples—He had warned him by an appalling announcement of the dread consequences which were to wait on his sin—He had invested the gra-

* The reader will remember an opinion adverse to the reasoning in the text, advanced on high authority. A patient consideration of the express words of Scripture will show which of the contradictory schemes is most characterised by an "abstemious fidelity." One of them *assumes* that the objection of the priests as to the time of the betrayal was respected—one *infers* that it was overruled. If the inference be just, the unwarranted assumption should be regarded as rendering the sovereignty of the Lord's will more conspicuous.

cious ministration and the solemn warning with more constraining power by a revelation that He knew what was in the heart of the purposed betrayer;—and when all was vain—when the vitiated heart rejected warning and counsel—then the Lord spoke as He would command unconscious nature—as He would command spirits of evil who had no part in Him—and His word was submissively obeyed. “He then, having received the sop, went immediately out.”

May we regard the mandate of the Lord as determining the time in which He was betrayed? He had said, “I lay down my life for the sheep”—He had said, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Surely, the notices of sovereign command in this hour of suffering and redemption, frustrating the purposes of the rulers, accelerating the perfidy of the traitor, and bowing down the rude multitude who came with him to the betrayal as his ministers, are in harmony with that high claim of the Lord, to lay down a life which no man could take from Him. Yes! It was in obedience to the sovereign will of the Lord Jesus, that “the same night” in which He instituted the memorials of His death, was, also, the night in which He was betrayed.

And, on this night, two holy solemnities met together. On this night, the Lord commemorated the Passover of the old law and instituted that of the new. Both had their fulfilment and end, when “Christ our Passover was sacrificed;” and when He arose from the observance of the rite which was to cease, it was that He should, first, minister to His disciples in that act of condescension significant of the great truth, that whoso

shared in His redemption, must be cleansed by His sanctifying influences, and that then He should institute and ordain the memorial which is to endure for ever—the Holy Sacrament, which demands, for its due observance, as an indispensable pre-requisite, “the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost.”*

Embarrassment has been caused by expressions in the Gospel according to St. John, from which it was understood that there were some among the Jews who had not eaten the Passover until after the time when the Lord Jesus was betrayed. Various attempts have been made to reconcile the seeming discrepancy. But, in truth, there is no discrepancy. The Gospel narratives would teach us to observe, rather, *succession*, in the various paschal ceremonies. Succession there must have been, as, indeed, we are instructed there was, in the temple services, and accordingly, we may conclude, in the feasts. The vast number of lambs to be offered and *slain at the temple*†—the confined limits of the city—the multitudes who, at the time of the Passover, assembled there from all Judea, and for whom the accommodation of “guest chambers” was provided, compel us to remember that there must have been rigid adherence to a most economical distribution of time and space, in order that the injunctions of the law should be respected. And thus those variations for which explanation is demanded, so far from being discrepant one from the other, or from the circumstances, are all in harmony, and conspire to bring to our thoughts the incessant and jubilant demonstrations of the holy city, continued, it may be, without an interval, during that

* Titus iii. 5.

† Deut. xvi. 5 6.

period of unimaginable suffering in which Christ, our Passover, underwent the mysterious agony, which had no human witness, in the garden—and submitted to the ignominy of the Cross.

Before all this, the Lord had kept the Passover of the old law and instituted the Christian. That He observed the Jewish Passover, the instruction to His disciples to prepare it, would have convinced us. In the Gospel according to St. Luke, however, that testimony is more direct, and is more significant and instructive.

“And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

“And He saith unto them, With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

“For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”*

There is nothing ambiguous here—the Lord earnestly *desired to eat of this Passover*, because it was to be *the last He should eat* with His disciples. The expressions which follow are not less unequivocal and distinct.

“And He took the cup and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves :

“For I say unto you, *I will not drink of the fruit of the vine*, until the kingdom of God shall come.”†

This cannot be misunderstood. The disciples were to take the cup and divide it among themselves, because *their Master would not partake of it*.

Thus, we learn, the Lord *ate of the Paschal lamb*, but *did not drink of the cup*, in the celebration of the *Jewish Passover*. The form of expression in which the cup was declined in this instance, serves to instruct us

* St. Luke xxii. 14, &c.

† St. Matt. xxvi. 29; St. Mark xiv. 25.

that our Lord observed the same abstinence in *the Passover He instituted*. It was not, perhaps, absolutely necessary that the purpose to abstain should be expressed a second time (the words recited by St. Luke applying to the new rite equally with the old); but the repetition gives emphasis to the expression, and calls attention to the instruction it imparts. Bear in mind, then, and reflect upon the revealed truth—that our Lord, when celebrating the Jewish, and instituting the Christian, Passover, abstained, himself, from participation in the wine cup, of which He commanded His disciples to drink. He ate of the Passover. To do so was a duty prescribed by the letter of the law; to partake of the cup was not of express obligation, and He abstained.

The abstinence of our Lord is intelligible. It was characteristic—appropriate to His office—and suitable to the occasion.

It was characteristic of our Lord, that the appliance from which mortal hearts derive force in their faintness shall have no part in nerving Him for the agony. As He sustained temptation in the wilderness, He will endure the severer trial, strengthened, not by earthly aliment, “but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

It was appropriate to the Lord’s office. So was this abstinence explained by the fathers of early times. The injunction addressed to the priests* under the law, that they abstain from wine when the time of their altar service drew nigh, the Lord, it is said, applied to himself. “Drink you, said He (thus Origen† explains the passage), who are not immediately about to ap-

* Lev. x. 9.

† Origen, Hom. vii. in Leviticum.

proach the altar. But of himself, as approaching the altar, He says, Verily I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

The abstinence was meet for the occasion—an occasion on which Christ observed the apparently conflicting injunctions of two great solemnities, and reconciled them. The feast of Passover and the fast of Atonement represented the same event under different aspects—one having respect to the deliverance from sin and its curse, and the other to the enormity of sin and the sufferings through which redemption was to be effected. On the one, the Jewish people accounted it matter of obligation to rejoice before the Lord. Of the other, it was written, "It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, *and ye shall afflict your souls*, by a statute for ever." The apostles were come together to eat of the Paschal feast. To the spirit of their Divine Master the gladness of the Passover had the gloom of the day of atonement spread over it. He makes provision that the solemnities of both shall be commemorated. To eat of the Paschal lamb was, as has been observed, a duty prescribed by the letter of the law—to drink of the wine cup was a form superadded by traditional obligation. The Lord distinguishes between the supreme and the inferior authority—giving to the Passover what the law of God expressly enjoined—assigning to the day of atonement appropriate honor in His permitted abstemiousness. Thus does He observe the obligations of the two great days; and, by withholding from one an observance which was of no more than traditional authority, enables himself to keep the law of Holy Scripture respecting both.

The command to drink of the cup no longer rests on the authority of tradition. It has become scriptural. The wine which, on that solemn night, the Lord would not taste, He exalted to the majesty of typifying His precious blood, and commended it to the disciples and to His church among the memorials of His death.* His apostles "all drank of it"—He, alone, partook not of the cup—and His abstinence is thus rendered more conspicuous and signal. He who administered the Sacrament, abstained—they to whom He ministered, drank of the cup. I need not speak to you of a communion in which this order and arrangement is directly reversed; but it is difficult to pass from such a subject without expressing a thankful sense of the provident care with which the Lord seems to have anticipated and condemned, an iniquity, by which, after a lapse of more than eleven hundred years, the divine symbolism of His Holy Eucharist was outraged.

In what has been here submitted to you, it is assumed that the words of our Lord, in instituting the memorials of His death, are to be understood in their obvious and natural, that is—a figurative signification. This is not the signification assigned to them by a large proportion of the Christian world; and although our present subject does not require or admit of a detailed exposure of the arguments which either of the conflicting schemes of interpretation has had advanced in its defence, it does demand that I should lay before you, in brief outline, a notice of certain grounds on which the fidelity of our interpretation can be established. Such are—the occasions on which our Lord's words of institution were pronounced—the manner

* St. Mark xiv. 23.

in which the apostles received them—and, what ought not to be overlooked, the fact that they who profess to receive them in the strictly literal sense, invalidate their own interpretation by the doctrine they build upon it.

Of the truth of this last assertion you can convince yourselves by comparing with our Lord's words of institution the doctrine which pretends to correspond with them when literally interpreted. The very name of this doctrine shows the fallacy of such a pretext. It is a name which implies the assumption, that whatever may be called body is a composite being, constituted of certain elements apprehensible by sense, and of one imagined or presumed; and which regards change in this undiscerned and indiscernible particle as equivalent to so great a change as that of one body into another. This is to pronounce the thing or fantasy called "substance" the same with the existence to which the name "body" is given. This name, in each several instance, popular use assigns to those sensible attributes which it regards as the effective realities of being; and if the propriety of such use of language be disputed, still less can it be held just to apply the name, exclusively, to a philosophical abstraction which cannot be discovered in nature, and which may have no existence save among the creatures of the understanding. Let it be granted that the indiscernible, as well as the sensible, elements must be united in order to render the name appropriate—let it be granted that both must have been contemplated by our Lord, when He assigned the name; and even after this concession, it will follow, that, if His words are so restricted as to denote one class, only, of the elements of which body consists, they are not used in their literal signification.

They are so restricted in the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Its very name confesses that the change it denotes is not adequate to that implied in our Saviour's words, if they are to be literally interpreted.

And if, under one aspect, this doctrine violates the rule of interpretation it is built upon, because of inadequacy, there is another aspect of it in which it is offensive, because of excess. Literally understood, the words of our Lord would insist on more than Transubstantiation professes, on the one hand; and they make no provision for so much as it pretends, on the other. To establish conformity between the words of institution and the doctrine, it would be necessary to show that the word "body" means no more than "substance," and, at the same time, that it signifies as much as "person." That is to say, it must be set free from the restraints of all rules of interpretation—philosophical, popular, or literal.

The question, in what sense language is to be understood, will, generally, find its answer in the forms of expression to be explained, and the occasion on which they were made use of. Habit has rendered us unobservant of much that is figurative in our ordinary language, and has thus made it literal; while occasion may assign to expressions, seemingly literal and of material import, a figurative or a spiritual sense, in which, only, they are intelligible.

On the occasion of the Paschal feast, the language, if appropriate, must be figurative. The various incidents of the feast were regarded not in themselves, but in their anti-types—as what they represented, not what they actually were. The Paschal lamb was pronounced *to be* the lamb slain in Egypt; the bread

and the bitter herbs were the bread of affliction eaten by the fathers. And when the Lord, having observed the required forms, and spoken the language appropriate to the feast, proceeded to institute the solemnity, by which it was to be superseded, or into which, rather, it was transfigured—was it not natural that the language He used in the institution of the new rite should accept the same rule of interpretation as was admitted in this observance of the old? An abrupt transition from the language of type would have caused uncertainty and confusion.

It may be confidently affirmed, that the disciples understood their Master's language according to the analogy of the old Paschal forms, and accounted "bread" to be "Christ their Passover" in the Gospel rite, as they accounted the material of the Jewish memorial to be the lamb slain in Egypt. For this we have more than conjecture.

The especial distinction of the Christian Passover is that precept conveyed in the words of my text, a precept against which, if understood in its literal sense, the apostles were all strongly pre-occupied. What their divine Master enjoined, thus understood, the law prohibited; and this opposition was the more signal and decided, and would have proved the more embarrassing, because the seemingly conflicting injunctions, both, appealed for their explanation, to the same reason, and both claimed an authority derived from the same dread sanction.

The law commanded to abstain from the use of blood—laid the foundation of its command in the principle that the blood, which is the life, is shed for the remission of sin; and gave it a dread authority by pronouncing as

a punishment for disobedience that cutting off from the congregation which was equivalent to the penalty of death. For the reason on which the law grounded its prohibition, our Lord issued His command; and transferred the punishment declared in the law against the soul that eateth blood, to the soul that abstaineth. *Because the blood maketh atonement*, the law said—abstain, else ye die. *Because the blood maketh atonement*, the Lord said—drink, else ye cannot live.

It is difficult to imagine contrast more decided than this, between the command of the Lord Jesus, understood in the literal sense, and that of a law which the disciples had been trained to venerate and love—and by which they were influenced even through their unreflecting prejudices. The Apostle Peter dared to remonstrate against a voice from heaven, in deference to the ceremonial law—he did not remonstrate against the injunction of our Lord. The Apostle James, in an assembly where, with but one exception, all were met together who had eaten with the Lord His last Paschal feast, gave his sentence for continuing the prohibition against blood. He and they drank of the cup which Jesus presented. Manifestly, then, all understood the Saviour's words in a sense in which they were reconcileable with the great commandment of the ceremonial law. Former discourses of the Lord had predisposed them to understand what, otherwise, in its spiritual significancy, would have been "a hard saying;" and it is matter of just inference, that they were thus enabled to interpret properly their Master's words, when yielding to them so prompt an obedience. Spiritually understood, it is conceivable, that the precept of our Lord was not only reconcileable with the

prohibition of the ceremonial law, but identical with it. The same injunction may have been conveyed in both commandments, but in different forms. It was *to the spirit* the Lord Jesus commended the chalice of His blood—the legal prohibition of blood contemplated use of it for nutriment *of the body*; and there is not much difficulty in understanding that the sacred horror, by which it became invested in the law, may have served to commend it to the thoughts and faculties of the soul, while protecting it against the profaning influence of ordinary and sensual uses.

Let it be imagined, that the expression of our Lord was understood by the apostles in that sense in which St. Augustine, in a well-known and memorable passage,* teaches how it ought to be interpreted, and they would have found in it this apt correspondence; and would have felt that if there were distinction between the new injunction and the old, it was the variance, not of contradiction, but of progress.

To this great distinction, I hope soon to crave your attention. May God dispose us to understand and value it. May we be sensible of the wisdom and goodness with which He has guarded against misconception in His Word, and the provident care with which He has protected His holy mysteries. Great changes have been wrought in society and social institutions, since these blessed memorials were ordained—mighty revolutions have shaken the kingdoms

* If a precept forbid a wicked action, or command a good, it is to be understood literally. If it command a wickedness, or prohibit good, it is figurative. For example:—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." This seems to command an evil action, and therefore is to be received in a figurative sense, enjoining us to communicate in the passion of the Lord, and to lay up in our minds that His flesh was wounded and crucified for our sakes.—*See De Doctr. Christ.*, lib. iii. c. 16.

of the world—many unedifying practices, many false doctrines, have insinuated themselves into religion—and through all vicissitudes, and spite of all corruptions, God's holy Sacraments have had such watchful guardianship, that error has not wholly prevailed against them. From "the night in which He was betrayed" to this hour they have shown "the Lord's death"—they will execute, we have a sure trust, the same divine office "till He come."

May we be mindful of this great mercy, and while thus admonished of the death of Christ to save sinners, and of His coming to judge the world, may we be duly sensible of the responsibility we have contracted. "As often as ye do eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come"—ye show to your meditative spirits that in which your interest is deepest, for time and eternity, in the past and the future. The memorials of Christ's dying for us, command you to look back, and in the world's history you behold no phenomenon more awful than that to which they direct you—the darkened mount, and Him who was uplifted on a cross to die. They bid you look onward, and it is to the dread spectacle of that day, when the throne shall be set, and the books opened, "and the dead, small and great," shall "stand before God"—when, "whosoever is not found in the book shall be cast into the lake of fire."

Thus do the Lord's institutions discourse to us—Salvation, or the judgment. May it be given us—while it is day—to hear their admonition.

LECTURE IV.

ST. MATTHEW xxvi. 27, 28.

“And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

IN instituting those holy mysteries, which were to be at once memorials of His death and pledges of His love, the Lord delivered “the New Testament.” Thus we are instructed with authority. Four narratives of the institution have been written for our learning, and in each the same great truth has been recorded. On the night in which He was betrayed, and on which, for the last time, He kept the Passover of the law, within that portion of duration which was denominated, especially, His “hour,” the Lord perfected and delivered His testament of grace and mercy. “This is my blood of the new testament,” as we read in St. Matthew and St. Luke—“The new testament in my blood,” as recorded by the Apostles Luke and Paul. In each recital the “new testament” is declared, and the cup is the symbol in which it is delivered.

There is variety of form in the language in which this great truth is conveyed, but not such as to cause

in us any disquiet or doubt. Among those who hold the Scriptures of secondary authority, it may be, indeed it has been, profanely said, that if our Lord spake the words we find in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, He did not speak what has been recited by St. Paul. *We* read Holy Scripture, I thank God, in a different spirit. Where we can understand Scriptural narratives as mutually supplemental, we will not wantonly assume that variance implies discrepancy. If the expressions ascribed to our Lord are not identical in signification, we can understand that *both were spoken by Him*. And we can also understand, that various narratives, written as the Holy Spirit guided each Evangelist and Apostle, may have been designed to exhibit the same truth under different aspects. But in what sense soever we regard those minute diversities of language—whether the Lord Jesus pronounced both forms of expression, or words equivalent to both—the revelation they convey to us is this:—that in the memorials of His death, our blessed Saviour delivered a testament, of which, communion in His blood, however the expression be interpreted, was to be the especial excellence and distinction.

This is, you will remember, the great characteristic of the Lord's ordinance. The body of our Passover is given in it, as well as the blood; but it is in the blood we are instructed to discern the testament which is called "new." In the eucharistic bread, broken and delivered at the Lord's Supper, the old testament may have been republished. Worshippers ate of the body of the Passover, under the law: they are to eat of it, in an altered symbolism, under the Gospel. In the blood, on the other hand, the law forbade participation. When worshippers removed the body of the slain lamb

from the Temple, they brought not with it the blood. This was offered on the altar. It had no representative at the feast. Such were the indulgences of the old testament, and such its inflexible prohibitions.—With readily intelligible meetness, therefore, the testament is called “*new*,” which directs, that, not *the type* which was offered in Egypt, but *the blood shed for the remission of sin*, shall be remembered in the Paschal feast of Christ’s church, and shall have its memorial in a form which the “*old*” testament had strictly interdicted.

I have used the word “Testament” in these reasonings without entering into the merits of the question whether another term might not be substituted for it with advantage. Unanimous consent in the “six important English versions,” as they are styled, “of the New Testament,” justifies my adoption of the word; and it is not essential to the interests of my subject, to compare its claims with those of the term by which some learned men would have it superseded. Whether a word signifying, in the original, “disposition,” be translated Testament or Covenant (so long as we bear in mind that death* is indispensably necessary, in order to its becoming valid, and taking effect), we can collect, in either translation, the truth which most concerns us.

By the death of Christ our Saviour, a covenant, or a testament, is confirmed, which appoints us participators in “the blood shed for remission of sin.” What is the importance of this new testament? What is the inestimable gift symbolised in the Mediator’s blood? We derive the answer, not from human conjecture,

* Heb. ix. 16, 17.

reasoning, or research—it is given us expressly, and with authority, in the written Word of God—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." To accomplish this great deliverance, an offering was made to the Father. An offering is also made to us—"Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament." What is it of which we are to drink? What is the blood? "The blood is *the life*."* This is the precious gift of the Lord. In commending to us the chalice of His blood, He gives us His life—He offered it for us—He bequeaths it to us—He laid it down, that it should purchase remission of sin—He imparts it, that believing spirits may be clothed with immortality. Such is the truth commended to us in the new testament of the Lord. Whosoever shall worthily commemorate His death, communicates in His life.

This is the new testament, or covenant, of our Lord. He died that His life should be the offering for sin, and that, through death, He should animate, with His offered life, those who will receive the benefit of His redemption.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Such is the gloyr of vegetable nature in the great change of its being. Life does not cease when the corn of wheat dieth. It is in abiding alone, unprofitable, that it is dead. The life that parts from it when it falls into the ground and dies, is not extinct or inactive. It is but liberated, to go forth with a quickening efficacy, imparting of its productive

* Deut. xii. 23.

energy to natures inert and alien, attracting them into living association with a germ of life to which they become assimilated, and in the power of which they grow. Such is the glory of vegetable being—and such our Lord has exalted to be a type of the glory with which He was to be crowned. Such is Christ's recompense for His bitter death and passion. Such is the glory of the new testament—the ministration of the Spirit. Compare this ministration with the testament of old. The old law was the ministration of death, and was characterised, in all its parts and processes, by an appalling consistency. Wherever the worshipper turned his observation, or his thoughts, inevitable death confronted him. Did he look back to the revelation of man's first estate, the death which sin had brought into the world was there. Did he look onward to the remission of sin, by the light that prophecy afforded, it was made awful in the death through which redemption was to be accomplished. Did he reflect on the incidents of his own being, he remembered that death was among the essentials, through which he had part in the covenant. Did he think upon the daily worship in the Temple (heart, as it has been called, of the national religion, pride of the people, joy, as they esteemed it, of the whole earth), he saw, that in that glorious edifice—"the place which God did choose to put His name there"—death ministered; and that the courts of the Lord's house—where His altar arose—reeked, continually, with blood, and were deformed with incidents and circumstances which gave a shuddering interest to the sudden severance of life and being.

Such was the old testament. Life and immortality are brought to light in the new. Life—interdicted to

our first parent, when, "lest he taste of the tree of life and eat, the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,"—interdicted to Noah, when the moving thing was given as meat for him, but it was said, "flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat"—interdicted to all under the law, when they were instructed that the life was in the blood, and that it was given them on the altar to make atonement for their souls;—life, thus withheld from man in all preceding dispensations, is imparted to him under the Gospel. The sacrifice for sin, to which the Lord's redeemed and regenerate look back, was a victory which broke the power of death, and was bright in the glory of the resurrection;—the death in which their own mortal being must close is but an anguish through which they enter into life eternal:—and the temple services, ordained by Christ in His church, give instruction and assurance, that here, in this state of mortal being, a new existence is imparted by the Holy Spirit, "Lord and giver of life," and that it has for its aliment the life which Christ gave for sin, and which He offers to all believers. In what sense, it is to be understood, that they who live hereafter are born again here, may be a subject of grave inquiry. This much is certain: Baptism teaches us that spiritual life here, in this mortal state, must have a beginning—the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper pre-supposes its existence.

What spiritual life is, words cannot explain to us. The life we live by nature is a mystery: we may describe its processes and qualities—there is in it something which we cannot understand. This much we know:—in this mortal estate of ours, life is a flame that wastes itself to decay, and is consumed if it be not

fed. It is so, God has declared, with respect to our life spiritual. As, in his natural life, man liveth by bread, his more exalted being is sustained by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. In the sacramental memorials of the Lord's death, we are enjoined to feed on Him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving. He is the truth and the life—He is the Word—He has the words of life everlasting; and in the solemn injunction He has laid upon us, there is assurance that He will grant what He commands us to accept—sustaining and sanctifying influences, by which spiritual life will be invigorated, and our life by nature governed and chastened.

In the processes and agencies through which spiritual life is sustained, it is God's gracious purpose that man himself shall have participation. In every stage and incident of this life, God is, himself, the author and giver of all good. Without Him, man would be helpless and hopeless, even as the minutest particle of unorganised matter. And therefore is the corn of wheat falling into the ground, and dying, and growing, a just type of God's power in imparting grace to the soul. And therefore is the true vine which supplies life to the branches, an apt type of Him who is life to the believer. And therefore is it revealed that the meat by which the soul of man is to live, is that bread which came down from heaven. But God will have His redeemed creatures agents in the great work of their salvation; and therefore He would engage in it the entire faculties of the human mind as well as man's passive reception of the good imparted to him.

It does not derogate from the sovereignty of God—on the contrary, it is consistent with a more exalted, as

well as a juster idea of His divine majesty—to believe, that He can assign a great office to human agency, and retain His power over all things. He appointed to man, before he fell, the duty he had to discharge—the indulgence from which he was to abstain. He assigns to fallen and ransomed man his duties—what he is to avoid, what he is to do. And to us, as to our first parents, these duties are appointed with merciful design, and are attended, in the faithful discharge of them, with salutary consequences. He supplies to man in this natural world the food by which his mortal being is to be sustained. Through His divine word He imparts richly the aliment by which his soul shall live; and it is not the less GOD that sustains this spiritual being, because, among the processes by which it is fed, thoughts and feelings, prayers and acts, of conscious, rational man, have their appointed place and office.

Let us be always mindful of this truth, and mindful of the duty it reveals to us. It is a thought under which the mind of man may well sink prostrate in a solemn sense of encreased responsibility—that the Lord Jesus Christ, when about to yield Himself a sacrifice for sin, bequeaths His life to the creatures for whom it is to be offered, and in pronouncing the testament of grace, demands, not a mere passive acceptance on our parts, but also that exercise of thought and will which God renders possible to those who pray. If, on the one hand, we rely on His glorious power to accomplish the promise He has given, we must, on the other hand, exercise the faculties with which He has endowed us, and the power He gives, to do Him service. Not alone in the act of showing forth the Lord's death should the injunction to drink of the cup of life be present to our

thoughts. Not less than Baptism, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper doth represent unto us our profession ; and in the habits of our daily lives the influence of the Lord's injunction should have power over us. So far as we are to have admitted instrumentality in the change, we feel that the life of the Lord Jesus, if it is to govern our lives, must engage our mental processes. If Christ live in us, His will should direct and move our wills, and He should have dominion over our thoughts. Thus will our obedience be, at once, spontaneous and true. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." We must know the Lord ; and when He is the light which governs our habits of thought, He will be life to govern our wills, and feelings, and actions.

It is not unmeet that, in this momentous interest, we accept instruction from our experience. It is not unusual that men become susceptible of influence from the lives of creatures like themselves, whom they reverence and love, and whom they exalt, by these strong feelings, to high dominion over them. We have learned how leaders of armies and of people, founders, or destroyers, of empires, have so laid their power on men, that, at their will, multitudes have moved, or have been still—have overcome difficulties which seemed insurmountable—have sustained privations which seemed too great for endurance—and have perished, with love and devotion unabated in their hearts, for the chief that conducted them to ruin. We have known when, to win the praise of such a leader, followers have resisted the strongest impulses of their nature—have withstood the most seductive temptations—have triumphed over their most agitating desires and fears. Is not this

as if an alien life had taken possession of their being, and governed the great principles of action?

And we have experience how such power can be acquired, and how those who have passed away from this earth, have, through a remembrance of their greatness, controlled the wills and stimulated the ambitions of fervid beings who have felt no impulse so strong as the desire to follow in the track of their glory. Therefore it has been thought useful, where better models were not found, to familiarise young hearts to the examples of worth with which ancient story is adorned. Therefore have the statues and the exploits of ancestors been esteemed powerful to assist the development of honorable aspirings, and to infuse, as a governing instinct into young hearts, never to disgrace the illustrious line with which they are connected.

In all this there is recognition of a principle which God has implanted in the constitution of man, and which is discernible even in his fallen estate—a principle on which the sage of old time relied when he said, if virtue appeared in a human form, all men would worship it. Yes! God has so constituted us that, fallen as we are, we are disposed to love worth, to reverence high power and authority, to be grateful for benefits and return love for love—to compassionate and honor the good man in distress; and, if this be true in the life that now is—and, if we see natures changed by the power of what are called generous influences, and by communion in the thoughts of those whom the world honours—why shall we not believe that there is power in the life of Him who gave himself for us, to fashion our whole being, and to renew a right spirit within us? If it be true, as you well know it to be, that your in-

terest in the men whose actions brighten history is deep and all-absorbing—if their sufferings and their successes be as your own—if you feel, when some great one has passed from his sphere, that a light you loved to gaze upon has left you cheerless in its departure—if, in some moment meet for contemplation, when withdrawn from the world, in solitude, in the silence of still midnight, as you read or remember words of power and thoughts or deeds of grandeur, your spirit kindles at the spirits of mighty men of old, and the fire which animated their hearts passes into yours, and possesses you with a solemn exaltation—and if, while your solitude becomes populous, and shadows of the illustrious dead crowd upon your memory, you burn with an elevating enthusiasm which, for a time, makes the world of reality seem pale and worthless—and you feel, while the proud emotion lasts, as if, for the interest of some great cause, you could devote yourself to dare and suffer—oh! if power like this to move and melt, and raise you above yourself, is in the memory of men who have at the best been influenced by mixed motives, and on whom often the instincts of a mad ambition has conferred an equivocal renown—can it be that He who came from the glory of heaven to save lost sinners, has left no influences in His words of everlasting life—in His mercies and His sorrows, to move and change you?

No—your own remembrances will guard you against so false and so degenerate an apprehension. You can remember times and seasons when consciousness of the Lord's goodness and mercy has possessed all your yielded faculties—when the thought of His condescension and love has impressed itself upon you, with a

transforming power—when you have felt a lively sense of His sanctifying presence, and your hearts have whispered, “It is good for us to be here.”

It is good for us to be here—good to be frequent in meditation on the life which the Saviour offers to inspire within us. I do not speak to you of the activities which should correspond with these purifying meditations. You know the judgment pronounced on those who called the Saviour, Lord, Lord; but did not the things which He said. You know, too, that He gives you opportunities of self-government and self-denial—of strenuous exertion—of patience and charity—in which faith and love of your Saviour may be proved and perfected. You know that His example is before you, and if you love Him you must walk in it.

The cup He commends to you is His life—His life of holiness and love. If we would enjoy the inestimable benefits of His passion, we must drink of it. We pray that God will bless His ordinances to our souls’ good. The prayer we offer *we should hear*; and should so live, in thought and act, that our hearts may be disposed to receive the benefits we pray for.

If thus, in earnest and active meditation, we resign our souls to the thoughts with which His blessed Word will surround us, we may trust with humble confidence that the life of the Lord will govern our lives. There is a power of truth in His words that will strengthen our faith—a benign concern for us in all His acts that will quicken our gratitude—and there is an efficacy in the sorrow of Him who was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins, that will force its way through all the barriers of our rude nature,

and graft within our heart of hearts the love of His holy name. Oh! meditate on the cup which He drank of—and the cup He proffers—His life for our life. May we so receive the precious gift, that we shall be in the number of His peculiar people, transformed by the renewing of His Word; and when, at the appointed time, we are raised from the death in which we have but laid us down and slept in the Lord, may we awaken up in His likeness!

LECTURE V.

ACTS I., part of ver. 3.

“To whom also He showed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs.”

ON the first occasion when the Lord Jesus exercised authority in the Temple, it was demanded of Him, “What sign showest thou, seeing that thou doest these things?” When the sign He promised had been given His answer was remembered and understood. “When, therefore, He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them, and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.” In the one solemn act recorded of the apostles during the interval between the ascension of the Redeemer and the coming of the Holy Ghost, their remembrance and belief seem to have been exemplified. The resurrection was *the* sign which was to avouch His sovereign authority; and when Matthias was appointed to the ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, the mission to which he was ordained was—to be, with the eleven,* a witness of that marvel and victory.

* Acts i. 22.

This was the mission of the inspired apostles. They preached "Jesus and the resurrection." They preached the Lord as King,* Prophet,† Priest,‡ Saviour,§ Judge;|| and in each several instance appealed to that only sign which, He declared, should be given to an evil and adulterous generation as the proof by which His title was established.

The doctrine of the resurrection bears, thus, a two-fold office. It is an apt assurance for our noblest hopes, and it is proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah. "If Christ be not risen from the dead," wrote the Apostle Paul, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain." On this great truth, that Christ is risen from the dead, the foundation of all true religion is rested. How deeply thankful should we be for the merciful provision, that, as history records no marvel in which we have a deeper interest, so is there none which has been authenticated by a more constraining weight of evidence.

The testimony thus provided for us is that of witnesses on whose veracity we may place implicit reliance. In the matter of their report, it has been proved (may we not say) to demonstration, that they could not be deceived, and would not be deceivers; while the form of their report is such as renders deception inconceivable. That four independent narratives, framed by such authors, shall harmonise so aptly, each with the others, and all with the antecedent portions of the Gospels, can be adequately accounted for by nothing less than an admission of their truth. They could not possibly have been the *creations* of their unlettered, unimaginative writers. That

* Acts ii. 30-32. † Acts iii. 20.

§ Acts xiii. 33-38.

‡ Acts xiii. 33; Heb. v. 5, 6.

|| Acts xvii. 31.

the Evangelists and Apostles *should have imagined* their Master risen from the dead, and have prepared such notices of His resurrection-estate as have been written for our learning, is less credible than the suborned report of the sentinels at the tomb—"His disciples came by night and stole Him while we slept."

But we cannot expect to derive the instruction which these divine records contain, unless we devoutly study and search them. They are not like the compositions of men whose inspiration is in their genius. The writer of a profane history strives to mediate, as it were, between his subject and his readers. Great things appear magnified by the power of his imagination, and truths obscurely discernible are made evident by his sagacity. Readers are taught to observe and value the judgment with which he distinguishes between truth and probability and fiction, and with which, as the event he records transcends the limits of ordinary experience, he strengthens and commends his recital of it by a corresponding force of testimony. It is not thus in the Gospel narratives. In these, on the contrary, among their distinguishing peculiarities, one marked characteristic is the manifest absence of all endeavour or design to enhance the interest of their momentous truths by the ordinary artifices of composition. Actions are related in them, and sentiments repeated, of character the most elevated and affecting; and the record is frequently unaccompanied by any expression of praise. Situations of the most thrilling interest are described, and described in language which bears no traces of emotion. Great marvels are fearlessly related, without any reference, but, perhaps, the most indirect and incidental, to the strong evidence

by which they are attested. Seeming contradictions are unreservedly set forth, and the Evangelist does not pause to show how they can be reconciled. Latent proprieties are preserved, and no care seems bestowed on an endeavour to render them conspicuous. In short, while the profane historian would allure his readers by the attractions of style and arrangement—while he would remove doubt and strengthen conviction by evidence judiciously selected and artfully displayed, the Evangelist, in a narrative rich in every species of evidence which can persuade the heart and convince the understanding, seeks not to influence either the judgment or the fancy by enticing words of man's wisdom, but, with a characteristic simplicity, addresses to the faith of man, a message of authority and mercy in which the whole human race is vitally interested, for time and eternity.

It is because the Gospels *are addressed to our faith* their construction is thus peculiar. They have marvels wrought as were those of our Lord himself, to reward and encourage the docile spirit, not for the gratification of an unprofitable curiosity. Perused with unconcern, their wisdom may remain a hidden treasure. Read them with the reverence due to God's Word—with the patient and profound attention which their subject, salvation,—demands, and you will find them not only abounding in influences which tend to subdue and purify the heart, but also preserving, among the internal testimonies to their truth, a harmony between effect and cause, a suitableness of circumstances and aims and ends, such as constitute an amount of testimony little less than miraculous.

It should not disturb or abate our thankfulness for

this great mercy, that ingenious men are said to have discovered variances, which they account discrepancies, in the narrative of our Lord's resurrection. None, it is affirmed, have been found, of such a nature, as to discredit the testimony of the narrative. In the substantial verities of their history, the Evangelists are all agreed. If there be difference in matters of detail, it is of that kind purely which would serve to render human testimony unsuspected. There ought not to be a different measure applied where the evidence is of a far higher order; and it should commend the testimony offered in the Gospels more strongly to our belief, to find, that, exposed as it has been to scrutiny for eighteen centuries, the matter of cavil discovered to its prejudice is so very trivial.

I would not leave such claims and reasonings unremembered; but I do not enter into any examination of them. The question to which I would direct your attention is very different. It is this:—Are the alleged discrepancies in the Gospels really to be found in them? Or—are they *inventions* of those by whom, it is pretended, they have been *discovered*?

In examining the narratives, I would suggest the wisdom of observing certain acknowledged rules of interpretation, of which, it may be, you already approve, but which it is not unmeet to call to your remembrance.

In the first place, we should discriminate between the language we endeavour to understand and *our own assumptions as to its scope and tendency*; secondly, we should be careful not to require in the narrative of an Evangelist, *more than it professes or promises*; and thirdly, we should not make the authority of Gospel historians dependant *on the consistency (or what we think*

consistency) of the agents whose actions they relate, or on the apparent relevancy of the expressions they have recited. The application of these plain rules to our subject will relieve it from much confusion and embarrassment.

And if such rules are always to be observed, it is surely most needful to bear them in mind when an inquiry is to be conducted into the history of a conjuncture unexampled since the creation of the world—a time when the Son of Man re-assumed the life He had given and the body in which He suffered for sin—when angels came down from heaven—when bodies of saints which slept arose—and when earth itself trembled as if inspired with consciousness of the mighty marvel wrought upon it. A time like this is not to be classed among ordinary epochs, or judged by the precedents of ordinary life. We should be especially careful that our own fancies do not mingle with its revealings, and that we do not misinterpret its phenomena by inapplicable rules of action. We are to examine narratives which profess to relate some of the gracious apparitions, in which, during a period of forty days, the Lord showed himself alive after His passion: let it be our first care to understand the language of such narratives in its unadulterate simplicity.

The day on which our blessed Saviour died closed upon an arrangement of evidences which established the truth of His death, and prepared for proofs of His resurrection. The crucified body was placed in a new sepulchre, hewn out of the rock, in which never man was laid, and the custody of the tomb thus honored was assigned to those whose interest it seemed, and whose purpose it certainly was, to keep it heedfully.

Thus, on the one hand, was provision made that the Holy One should not see corruption; and, on the other, that the evidences of the resurrection should be unambiguous. All this was done *without the intervention of the apostles*. At the prayer of the Jews, and in compliance with their law, the dead body was taken down from the cross. By the ministration of ^{one} who now, for the first time, gathered boldness in the emergency to show himself a disciple, it was consigned to a tomb; and, in compliance with the malign prayer of the priests, Pilate granted what might, perhaps, be understood as a disdainful permission to have the sepulchre guarded—"Ye have a watch—go your way, make it as sure as ye can."

Neither in this first period of the great history we are studying, nor in that which immediately follows, is any part or agency assigned to the apostles. Enemies, and disciples till now unavowed, are subjects of the narrative. The agency commemorated in the second period is that of *women*. They were, it has been beautifully said, of all His disciples, "last at the cross and first at the sepulchre."

"The women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid.

"And they returned, and prepared spices and ointment; and rested the Sabbath day, according to the commandment."

This preparation, we learn from St. Luke, was made with the purpose of embalming the crucified body; and it furnishes occasion for cavil to some of those who look for discrepancy in the Gospels. Their ground of objection is this: Nicodemus had already made provision

for the burial of our Lord; a supplemental provision on the part of the women was unnecessary; and therefore we ought not to believe that it was made. Such an objection assumes that the credit of a narrative is to be affected by the character of the agents described in it; so that, if there be qualities in those agents which the objector is incapable of understanding, he is not to believe the history. There are two aspects in which the burial of the dead may be regarded, according to the character of those who are concerned in it. In one sense, it is a pomp, regulated by the customs of society and the exigencies of rank and condition. In another, it is an office of love, in which the sorrowful affections of fond and faithful hearts indulge their tenderness. Considered in this aspect, what would be cumulative and superfluous as regards a tribute to the dead, will be a spontaneous, though, in a certain sense, a compulsory offering from the sad hearts of the living. Sump-
tuary edicts of mighty men and of great lawgivers have not the power effectually to interdict such offerings. Strong and deep affections will not have their ministrations confined within the limits of a frigid utility; and in many an instance there have been given, not merely treasures and tears, but life itself, voluntarily offered, to enrich the obsequies of loved ones who are departed. We cannot, then, admit that there is force in the argument of the objector. The testimonies and the tributes of Nicodemus, and of the women, manifest the characters of those who offer them: the captious objection of the sceptic shows the callous, rather than ingenious, temperament, in which incredulity may have found its "strong arguments."

A more plausible cavil, however, has been devised

by unbelievers to prove an inconsistency in this part of the divine narrative. It is to the effect that the preparations, which are described, in St. Luke's Gospel, as having been made on the day of the crucifixion, are referred by St. Mark to the evening *which followed* the Sabbath-day *and preceded* the morning of the resurrection. The words of St. Luke have been already recited. Those of St. Mark are :—

“And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, *had bought* sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.”

This is the language of our authorised version. If it be admitted, all pretext for suspicion of discrepancy is withdrawn: and even if the adverse translation be adopted, there is no ground for inculpation. Let us read it (as, indeed, eminent scholars pronounce it should be read) in the version which it is proposed to substitute—“When the Sabbath was past, *they bought* spices.” And let us also, with the impugnors, understand the narrative in St. Luke as instructing us that spices *had been bought*—or prepared *before the Sabbath commenced*. Let it thus be supposed that one Evangelist speaks of preparation made *before* the Sabbath obligation commenced, and the other *after that obligation ceased*—when (as is indisputably true) it was permitted to purchase—is there any thing inconceivable or inconsistent in the supposition of candid and learned men, that two preparations *were* made, each, respectively, at the time noted by the Evangelist who has recorded it?

The argument to prove discrepancy, be it remembered, rests on an assumption, wholly unwarranted, *that but one preparation was made*. To meet this argument, it is, on the other hand, affirmed, as matter of just inference

rather than assumption, that there was a second preparation. To which of these conflicting averments does the Gospel narrative give countenance? We may collect an answer from St. Luke. Of the women described by him as making the preparations he has noticed, he writes :—

“Now, upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices they had prepared, *and certain others with them.*”

Here are, it is manifest, *two parties* in one company—the party who had made preparation before the Sabbath, and another party with them. If we may credit the natural persuasion of our minds, that, of this united company, none appeared at the tomb without an offering (love delights, and especially in the hearts of the poor, to show and indulge itself in sacrifices and oblations), the recitals in the two Evangelists, even accepting the interpretation of those who strive to prove them at variance, are not merely reconcileable, but are mutually and necessarily supplemental to each other. St. Luke writes of certain women who prepared appliances *before the Sabbath commenced*—St. Mark, of purchases made by some, *after it had ceased*. St. Luke speaks of parties who *added themselves to the devout company*, after the preparation *before the Sabbath* had been made;—and, when we read in St. Mark of purchases effected *when the Sabbath was past*, does not the inference seem inevitable, that they were made by, or on behalf of, those who were too late to join in the first preparations, but who would not be denied the indulgence of offering their devout, although tardy, contributions.

Here, then, it may be said, are two hypotheses;—

one impugning the consistency of Gospel narratives, one reconciling an apparent discrepancy ; one, *an assumption* having no ground or authority save within the mind in which it has originated—the other, a just and natural inference from the express words of Scripture:—can there be a doubt which is to be preferred?

The visit of this faithful company to the tomb furnishes an occasion for imputing to the narrative another inconsistency. It was made, according to three of the evangelists, at the morning's dawn;—in the Gospel according to St. John, the expression occurs, "*while it was yet dark.*" And thus, it is said, the other evangelists and St. John are at variance. How marvellously sceptics overlook the obvious beauties—the admirable proprieties—of Holy Scripture! The difficulty or contradiction imagined by unbelievers ceases to exist the moment St. John's expressions are remembered and understood. "The first day of the week cometh"—Who?—"*Mary Magdalene*—early, while it was yet dark." How cold the heart that is capable of feeling contradiction, only, in this characteristic and most exquisite notice! The three other evangelists speak of *the company of women* on their way to the tomb, or arrived at it, when light had dawned. St. John writes of the one who went forth in darkness, alone—and that one was Mary Magdalene. If we are justified in believing that the testimony of the Gospels identifies the Mary who anointed the Lord's head in the house of Simon the leper, with the sister of Lazarus, and with her who was thus early a visitant to the tomb,—she who stood behind Him weeping—who sat still in the house of mourning until she heard that the Master was come and called for her, while Jesus was alive—she it

is, who—*now that that Divine Master has given His life and is laid in the sepulchre*—cannot govern the impatience with which she feels the night creep tardily over—will not wait for the slow rise of day, but goes forth, “while it is yet dark,” on her mission of love. Here, assuredly, all is consistent, from the moment when Mary Magdalene goes forth on her way, alone, while the darkness is around her, to that time when the assembled company (assembled, perhaps, by her), who have walked through the deep stillness of morning, arrived at the sepulchre as the sun arose.

We will, for the present, abstain from considering the majestic apparition by which these devout women were greeted, and give our thoughts to another charge of inconsistency advanced against this part of the narrative. Our blessed Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene after she had accompanied Peter and John to the sepulchre. He appeared to the women when they were on their way to acquaint the disciples with the announcement made to them by the angel. Mary had been with them when this announcement was made—how could it be, then, that the Lord should have appeared to her “*first*?”

St. Matthew writes, of the women—“And as they went to tell His disciples, behold Jesus met them.” Is this consistent with the report of a separate and a prior appearance to Mary Magdalene? It is manifest, from the Gospel according to St. Luke, that Mary was with the other women when they were commissioned to convey a message to the Lord’s disciples, and that she performed her part in the mission. “It was *Mary Magdalene*, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told those

things unto the apostles." Thus, it would seem, Mary was in the company who received the commission, and did not fail to perform her part it:—how, then, we are asked, could she have seen the Lord apart from the other women, and *before they had seen Him?*

The narrative in the Gospel of St. Mark seems to suggest the explanation. In the other Gospels it is said, that the women were instructed to convey a message to the disciples. In that according to St. Mark, the name of Peter is added—"Go your way, tell the disciples, *and Peter.*"

Peter "went out and wept bitterly," is the last notice we have had of the repentant apostle until he is made the especial object of this message. He had, perhaps (so it is natural to imagine), dwelt apart, in shame and sadness, since his fall; and when we learn from St. John, that *it was Mary Magdalene* who conveyed to *Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved*, tidings from the sepulchre, we cannot but feel that there was meetness in the messenger. She knew (especially if she were Martha's sister) the comfort of hearing—"The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

That she told what had been heard at the tomb, we learn from the Gospel of St. Luke—from whom we learn, further, that the words thus told appeared as idle tales; but *she* told also, we may feel assured, *what she had seen*—told of the tenantless sepulchre—that they had taken away the Lord, and she knew not where they had laid Him. This had power over the two disciples—they ran, and the celerity of their movements was the celerity of a race. They ran both, but "that other disciple did outrun Peter."

It is quite conceivable that all this, and the apparition

vouchsafed to Mary, may have been concluded before the other women had delivered up their commission. There was a moment of trepidation among them. "They went out quickly," writes St. Mark, "and fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed, neither said they any thing to any man, for they were sore afraid." Some little time must have elapsed before their hearts were quieted and they were on their way to tell the disciples; and thus it is easily conceivable that the incident related by St. John, and by St. Mark, may have been concluded before that appearance to the women recorded by St. Matthew.

All would thus seem consistent. It is necessary only that we accept the testimony of each Evangelist for what he directly affirms, and do not misinterpret the partial silence of any one of the inspired writers into contradiction of another. St. Matthew and St. Mark tell of a commission given to the women; the former declaring "the disciples" to be the objects of it;—the latter particularising also the name of Peter. From this twofold form of the commission, we would naturally hold it separable into two parts—at least it is permissible so to hold it—one directing that a communication was to be made to "the disciples;" the other, to an individual once eminent among them, but who, in a moment of weakness and trial, had denied his Master. To this latter portion of the mission, St. John instructs us, one of the women promptly addressed herself—"Mary Magdalene runneth to tell Peter."

From St. Luke we learn that the other women also executed the task assigned to them—"They returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest." Thus all fulfilled their

mission, but we may infer, from the combined narratives of the Evangelists John and Mark, that there was perturbation and alarm among the women which, for a time, incapacitated some, and in which Mary Magdalene may not have equally participated. The words of St. Mark are—"And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." Speechless with terror for a time, St. Luke's testimony assures us, they recovered the use of their faculties. The first to awaken from stupor, if she had ever suffered from it, was Mary Magdalene. To her, St. Mark testifies, the Lord showed himself first; and, then, we can understand, vouchsafed to the women, as they went to tell His disciples, the apparition described by St. Matthew.

Shall it be objected against such an arrangement as this, that to each separate portion of it one Evangelist alone bears testimony? The objection, daringly as it is often urged by defamers of Holy Scripture, is groundless. In historical evidence, purely human, inasmuch as the highest assurance it affords cannot transcend the limits of probability, cumulative testimony is desirable, because in proportion to the number and the credibility of the witnesses must be the degree of confidence with which men receive their asseverations. Certainty admits not of degree; and the persuasion imparted by the direct testimony of an inspired writer is not less than certainty. In accommodation to our weakness of apprehension, for the salutary exercise of our understanding, and for many other reasons, the same incident, and the same precept, may be narrated and expounded by various writers in the Holy Scriptures; but, for the purpose of mere

testimony, a revelation once declared in God's written Word can have no more convincing assurance. Its excellencies may be more abundantly disclosed to us as fuller light is thrown upon it; but a single inspired witness imparts certainty of truth, and certainty can have no augmentation.

I proceed no further, on the present occasion, with notices of the charges which have been hazarded against the consistency of the Gospel narratives, but crave your attention to one peculiarity which seems to me especially worthy of your consideration.

The advantage derived to the cause of truth from a reserve in the revelations vouchsafed respecting the resurrection of our Lord, has not been unnoticed or unvalued. In "showing himself openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God," the provident mercy of the Lord is very generally recognised. Had the people, in large masses, rejected evidence offered to their senses, "that the Lord was risen indeed," the evidences they rejected would have been discredited to future ages by the unbelief of those to whom they were primarily addressed. Had they believed and embraced the religion of a crucified Saviour, persecution would not have guarded the purity of the Christian faith, or authenticated and commended to us the testimony of its martyred preachers. All this and more is well known, and has been frequently a subject of learned and edifying disquisition. There is one instance of reserve, however, which does not seem to have received the consideration it merits—one which will reward attention richly.

No appearance of our Lord to Mary, His mother, after He arose from the grave, is recorded in Holy Scripture. Witnesses "chosen before," to whom He showed himself

alive, are named, and her name is not amongst them. He appears to Mary Magdalene, to Mary the mother of James, to Salome, to Joanna, to Peter, to the disciples journeying to Emmaus—to the eleven, to five hundred brethren at once—and there is no express record that in any instance He appeared to her who was so highly favoured, and who was blessed among women. Have you ever reflected on this very remarkable reserve, and felt as if it needed explanation? And might it not be said, that in noticing the parsimony of evidence afforded, and naming so many of those to whom “He showed himself alive,” Holy Scripture seems to direct our attention to the omission of our Lord’s mother from the witnesses, “chosen before,” to whom He condescended to show himself?

Let me not be understood as seeking to extort, from a peculiarity in the Gospel narratives, more than it necessarily could imply. I do not mean to argue that the Lord may not have, in very many instances, consoled and encouraged the virgin mother, by manifestations of His visible presence. She was, we may feel assured, among those to whom He repeatedly showed himself alive, and may have enjoyed privileges of unreserved communication with Him to an extent even greater than was vouchsafed to the apostles. I mean to affirm no more than this—that no apparition to Mary, the mother of our Lord, has been made the subject of revelation—that there is no record of it in Scripture—that it is not an object of Christian belief. The last mortal thought of Jesus on the Cross the Scripture has recorded—“Woman, behold thy son!—son, behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” Who would not have ima-

gined that, in that house, the risen Jesus, first, after His resurrection, would have showed himself alive? That that woman, and that disciple, so favoured in His hour of death, would have been the earliest comforted by the assurance of His resurrection? No such imagination is realised in the Gospel narrative; neither is evidence found there of even one such apparition, nor is the omission of such evidence accounted for. Reflect upon this seemingly disappointing reserve, and judge whether, when explained, it ought not to be classed among those internal evidences of truth, which attest and accredit, in this our day, the narrative it characterises.

Of all the forms in which creature-worship could array itself to tempt mankind, it is easy to understand adoration of the mother of our Lord to be the most attractive. Pious affections of our hearts would disguise its enormity—the most interesting of all imaginable relations would exert an influence to recommend it, and, if Holy Scripture afforded any foundation, however precarious, whereon to build, man would erect, to the virgin mother, an altar on which the best gifts of the heart and spirit would be sinfully offered. Thus is the reserve of Scripture plainly intelligible.

And here, let it be permitted to say, the explanation I offer is no novelty precipitately advanced. It is no more than an application to the concluding portion of the Gospels of that principle by which eminent men of old sought to explain what appeared to them a characteristic abstemiousness in the Lord's history before His crucifixion.

The carefulness with which, through His whole public life, He made it manifest that, in the order of creation,

G

His blessed mother was to be accounted not more than woman, was observed of old, and was explained as having the design to testify beforehand against heresies which, in after ages, offered unpermitted honors to the virgin. May we not apply the principle of such interpretations to the marked peculiarity we are considering, and affirm, with reverence but with little doubt, that the absence of any notice in Holy Scripture of an apparition to Mary, after Jesus had arisen from the dead, is but a continuance of that reserve which had been wisely guarded in the antecedent portion of the Gospels?

Thus is the narrative of our Lord's life uniform and consistent. Thus is the same principle discernible after His resurrection and before His cross. And thus does His divine history instruct us, in all parts, that, however creature-worship may accommodate itself to the cravings of the heart of man—however the best affections of our unchanged nature may welcome and recommend it—however it may disguise itself to engage and interest human fantasy and feeling—whatever auxiliaries it may find to advance its enterprises elsewhere, it shall have no countenance in Scripture.

Here pause we on this appropriate and salutary reserve—a tacit protest and warning against the seductions of false religion—an unsuspicious testimony to the truth and consistency of the Gospel narrative.

Meditate upon its significance and importance; and let not another testimony, by which it is aptly accompanied, be unremembered. Without this its instruction would be incomplete. The conduct and demeanour of our Lord, not only towards His mother, but towards His disciples, also, before the Cross and after the resur-

rection, mutually illustrate and explain each other. Three times, it is said, our Lord spake to the virgin mother—twice in mild expostulation against her interference in His mission—once commending her to the filial protection of the beloved disciple, as she stood weeping by the Cross. Once, He spake most memorable words, of which His mother and His disciples were the subject:—

“Then one said unto Him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

“But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

“And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”*

This is the language of the Lord before He suffered on the Cross:—is not the reserve which characterises the narrative of the forty days after His resurrection in admirable keeping *with one member* of the discourse;—and is not the harmony made perfect in the portion which provides meet counterpart *for the other*? Twice the women who visited the tomb are commissioned, by created ministers, to bear tidings of the resurrection—and the injunction is, “Go tell His *disciples*.” The Lord himself gives the same commission. And in what form? “Tell *my brethren*.” Thus spake Jesus before His passion—thus spake He after His resurrection—thus speaketh He still in His revealed Word—even from the Majesty in heaven. “These are my brethren,” spake Jesus, while He taught

* St. Matthew xii. 47, &c.

the multitudes on earth. "Go tell my brethren," spake He to Mary Magdalene in His first apparition from the tomb. "Go tell my brethren," spake He to the women when on their way to the disciples. As it was at the first apparition, so was it at the last recorded in Scripture history—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?—I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Thus "hath God spoken unto us by His Son." May we have hearts sensible to the love His words express. May the assurance of such love have power over us.

LECTURE VI.

ACTS 1., part of ver. 3.

“To whom also He showed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs.”

INFALLIBLE proofs of the resurrection were designed for us as well as for those who were eye-witnesses of them. To the first disciples they were vouchsafed in apparitions of the risen Saviour;—for us they are provided in narratives of the apparitions, and of their influence on those who beheld them; and it is not rashness to affirm, that the testimonies thus graciously offered to us are not less powerful to satisfy the judgment of a reflecting and unprejudiced reader, than were those evidences which convinced the apostles. The light which brightened their lives is reflected on us. We compare the altered aspect of the world in this our day with the lineaments it wore when Christ came to be a deliverer and Saviour;—we look to the condition and character of the witnesses through whose instrumentality the mighty change was effected—and while we see their natural character disclosed in the terror which scattered them when their Master was led to the judgment, and the despondence into which they sunk when His body was laid in the grave, we look upon them in another

state of being also, and acknowledge the strength of their conviction and the power of the great truth which they believed, in the fidelity and fearlessness with which they preached, to a hostile world, "Jesus and the resurrection." "We trusted that it had been He who should redeem Israel:"—so spake the desponding disciples, as they walked and were sad. "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also," proclaims the reputation achieved by the followers of our Lord, when they knew for a certainty that their Master was risen from the dead.

If there be ground of conviction for us in the change thus evidenced in the minds of the apostles, and in that wrought through their instrumentality in the kingdoms of the world; the inspired narrative which records their history has, also, its strong testimonies in marks of genuineness and authenticity which cannot be doubted or overrated. How amply it has been accredited by direct and positive testimonies, you need not be reminded. But there are evidences of a different character, incidental, apparently undesigned, to which, in some instances, the cavils of gainsayers have guided us—these, perhaps, have not so much engaged your attention, and such as these are the species of proof which it is my desire on this occasion, as it was on a former, to lay before you.

It has been shown, that in the selection of witnesses to whom the Lord showed himself alive, there was a providential parsimony which guarded from suspicion the testimony bequeathed to us. A reserve not less salutary, in the manifestations by which the resurrection was shown, distinguishes its Gospel history. I would commend to your thoughts some examples.

No human eye is said to have beheld the Lord in the act of rising from the dead. No revelations respecting the unseen world, such as human curiosity would covet, are reported by the evangelists. And, unless we regard, as miraculous, those apparitions and occultations of himself, in which the *laws of glorified body* (it may be) *were shown*, rather than those of natural body *suspended*, the narrative of the forty days is but sparingly illuminated by miracle.

The Lord was not seen in the act of rising from the dead. On three several occasions recorded in the Gospels, He had displayed His power over death; and in these there is observable, it may be, a reserve designed for our instruction. The ruler of the synagogue receives his daughter from the dead—the Lord has compassion on that desolate widow, and calls back to her her son—He restores Lazarus to his mourning sisters. But, “in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage,” and it is not said that our blessed Saviour, in any instance, renewed matrimonial relations which death had broken asunder. In each of the great exercises of power I have enumerated, there were witnesses. Much people beheld when the widow’s son arose from the bier. When Lazarus came forth from the tomb, many of the Jews saw and believed. And, even, when the daughter of Jairus was restored to life, and a charge was given to “tell no man what was done,” Peter and James and John, and the father and mother of the maiden, were permitted to witness the mighty marvel.

Thus we are taught that during our Lord’s public mission, at each recorded exercise of His power over death, witnesses were present. In that most glorious

triumph of all, when He accomplished an especial prediction and promise, by re-assuming the life He laid down, although irresistible testimony has been vouchsafed that all was accomplished, there was, at the precise conjuncture of the fulfilment, no human witness. And it may be added, that while, in the former instances, attention is called to the fact that witnesses beheld, so are we called on, in the last instance, to notice the absence of all such testimony.

“Now, when Jesus was risen, early the first day of the week, He appeared, *first*, to Mary Magdalene.”* “When He was *risen*”—not in the act of *rising*—not even in the act of going forth from the sepulchre. Within the sepulchre she saw “two angels.” In the garden she beheld the Lord, but “knew not that it was Jesus.” Thus circumstantial is the narrative of our Lord’s *first* apparition vouchsafed *after* He was risen. *It compels us to observe* that the act of resurrection *had no human witness*.

There was another apparition on this jubilant morning, of one whom the Evangelist describes:—“His face was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men.”† He who was thus terrible in his glory was not the risen Saviour. “And, behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone‡ from

* St. Mark xvi. 9.

† St. Matthew xxviii. 3, 4.

‡ Origen has preserved among his fragments from a great adversary, Celsus, a cavil and a taunt to this effect:—Could not Jesus, if He had the power ascribed to Him, open the sepulchre to go forth without an angel’s assistance? Origen’s reply is, that it was meet the Lord should be so attended—that kings and great ones of the earth had ministers thus to prepare the way before them—and heaven sent appropriately an angel to open His

the door, and sat on it.”* Assuredly, no contriver of cunningly-devised fiction would have described the angel and the risen Lord as we find them pictured in the Gospels. There is a peculiarity, too, in the commission given to the women as related by St. Matthew, to which I have already directed your attention. In one instance it is delivered by the angel†—in another by our Lord.‡ The angel commands, “tell His *disciples*”—the Lord, “tell *my brethren*.” Truth, only, under the circumstances, could account for this characteristic and exquisite distinction.

The peculiarity to which I would next direct your attention, is the paucity of revelations respecting the unseen world—the limited extent to which human curiosity is indulged, or encouraged, in the Gospels. “All power is given to me in heaven and in earth” is the substance of their disclosures. I dare not affirm that more may not have been revealed to the “witnesses chosen before of God.” It may have been meet that the apostles were to have their imaginations occupied and guarded with hopes, needful in their emergencies, before which the terrors of this world would grow faint, and its attractions lose their lustre. It may be, that, as *our* condition needeth not such revelations, neither

way before the Lord. In the same spirit, we are instructed, various among the fathers found it difficult to understand why it was that the Lord, who entered into the apartment where disciples were assembled while its doors were closed, should have required the ministration of an angel in His egress from the sepulchre. In this instance, there can be no difficulty in seeing that it was not Scripture, but an unwarranted assumption from it, which caused the perplexity. There is not a word to intimate that the angel came to give egress to the Lord—there is a plain intimation that it was among his offices to give ingress to the Lord’s disciples—“Come and see the place where the Lord lay.”

* St. Matthew xxviii. 2.

† St. Matthew xxviii. 7.

‡ St. Matthew xxviii. 10.

are we so constituted as to be profited by them. However it be explained, the fact is important, that, while in works of fiction (the highest achievements of human imagination), visitants to the realms of the disembodied are reported as bearing back secrets of the world unknown;—while, in spurious records of the Lord's resurrection, old, almost, as the first ages of the church, such revelations or fancies are found,—the sobriety of the Gospel narrative is never for a moment disturbed or colored by them.

When "Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, he said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist. He is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." The imagination was natural. Were the Gospel narratives the offspring of human fancy, they would be marked with lineaments of their parentage. The marvellous works wrought by our Lord, before His crucifixion, would have been outshone by the more amazing marvels of the victorious and risen Saviour. It is not so. Eleven, perhaps twelve apparitions of our Lord, are described as having been vouchsafed within the "forty days;" and, unless the power over His own body be accounted marvellous, miracle is but once recorded.

Reflect on these three negative distinctions, and say whether they do not strongly corroborate the positive testimonies that the Gospel narratives are not the works of man's imagination. Fiction, as well as history, has its laws and observances. Never, yet, was "cunningly devised fable" authenticated like the narrative of the resurrection. Never mere man spake as the inspired evangelists.

The commission entrusted to the women at the

sepulchre, has been misapplied to furnish occasion for—although it does not excuse—a charge of discrepancy, or inconsistency in the Gospel narratives, to which I would now call your attention. It had been said that there was contradiction between these narratives, some directing that the disciples should go into Galilee, others that they should abide at Jerusalem. It was seen, however, and acknowledged, that the apparent contradiction was reconciled by the fact that the seemingly conflicting instructions were issued at different times, and were both applicable to their respective seasons.

It is still insisted on, notwithstanding this acknowledgment, that there is an incongruity to be explained, or accounted for; and that, inasmuch as appearances of the Lord were vouchsafed on the day of His resurrection, and in the immediate neighbourhood of His tomb, it was superfluous labor that the disciples should be sent to look for proofs of that great marvel in a place so distant as Galilee.

A cavil of this description is appropriately responded to by a question—Why imagine that the apparitions in Galilee had no other object, and were to have no other effect, than to afford proof of the resurrection? There is no ground in Scripture for such an imagination. Indeed, a most memorable manifestation of himself to the disciples in Galilee would have been inadequate to the purpose for which it was designed—the Gospel narrative of it would have been inconsistent and improbable, had not infallible proofs been previously afforded that Jesus was risen from the dead.

An injunction, to which I have already adverted, may lead to the remembrance that more was to be done in Galilee than providing evidence of the resurrection

—"Tell His disciples, *and Peter*, that He goeth before you into Galilee." Compare this gracious command with the Lord's restoration of Peter to his apostolic office, and judge whether they do not mutually explain each other. The scene and circumstances in which he was called to his high office were to witness the solemnity of his reinstatement; *and the one miracle* which Jesus wrought, after His resurrection from the dead, *was a repetition of the marvel which signalled the elevation of Peter to the office of an apostle.*

Was it of trivial moment that the Lord should have chosen such a locality for the benign act of restoring a fallen disciple? He does not speak of the apostle's failure in faith. There is no upbraiding in the Lord's expressions; but nature surrounds the living group with a cloud of silent witnesses, and it is not possible that Peter could feel himself in the presence of a pitying Master—on the strand of the sea of Galilee—there, where every natural object admonished him of the time when the Lord once said unto him, "Follow me"—without being conscious of sentiments which must for ever have exerted a salutary influence upon him.

The life and altered character of Peter bore testimony to the impression produced upon him. The precept he so strenuously urges, "Be ye sober," tells in itself the story of changed habits and feelings. He had learned by adversity the importance of the quality in which he was naturally deficient. "Brethren, be sober—be vigilant—for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." This precept, spoken by Peter, taking all the antecedents of his life into account, bears upon it a character of personal experience as well as of inspiration. Can we not

understand, then, a meetness in the scene and circumstances of his restoration?—and may we not feel that the “tell the disciples and Peter,” and “I go before you into Galilee,” are both intelligible in the renewal of this apostle’s commission?

It is a very remarkable incident, that the only place in which the Lord promised that He would show himself, was Galilee. Before His crucifixion, and after He was risen from the dead, He gave this gracious promise. He gave the promise, He gave also command that the disciples should be warned of it; we can well believe that the five hundred, by whom He was seen at once, were gathered together through the gracious summons thus conveyed to them, and that it was in Galilee they beheld Him.

This is, no doubt, very memorable—very suggestive of deep thought—but, is there any thing in it contradictory or inconceivable? Who that reflected, and had a heart to feel, could think the command, “Go into Galilee,” inconsistent with the character of Him who gave it? In Galilee He condescended to abide during thirty years of infancy, youth, and manhood—years of comparative obscurity—in estrangement from the glory which He had with the Father before the world was:—there He called His disciples together—there He performed His first great marvel, and manifested forth His glory:—is it incomprehensible, that, after His resurrection, He should visit that region again? Are we so constituted as to think so? Do our hearts bear witness against the probability that He should re-appear there? And is not this one of those cases in which the testimony of a human heart may be credited? Who, is there to whom the recollections of early life are des-

titute of interest and attraction?—who does not, in many a meditative hour, revisit, mentally, those scenes where well-remembered objects restore to him hopes and visions in which his infancy or youth had felt an interest? Who is there that does not feel an earnest desire that it may be permitted him, in some favoured hour, personally, to return to them? The Lord Jesus Christ was “perfect man.” Without sin, He had taken to Him our nature, with its tenderesses. Of this His life, before He was lifted up to die, afforded affecting proof; and the apparitions He vouchsafed after He arose from the grave—the re-assembling disciples in scenes where they had listened to His gracious words, and witnessed His works of power and mercy, may instruct us, that there are “fair humanities” of our being, indestructible in death—so pure, so spiritual, that even the glory of the life after death does not consume them. As new proof of the Lord’s resurrection, His apparitions in Galilee may add nothing to the strength of our conviction; but there may be treasures of edifying thought for pious and reflecting and hopeful spirits, in the notice that “this same Jesus,” who is to come again, had thoughts of the home of early years in His mind when death was at hand, and in the first hours of His resurrection. Is it permitted us to believe that the sympathies in which such thoughts have their being, the Lord, our Saviour, bore with Him, when He went up on high, into the glory of heaven?

There is, in the circumstances of the last apparition vouchsafed to the disciples, something which would seem to commend this hope to us, and would encourage timid imaginations to receive it. We cannot picture to ourselves the august spectacle which that day of wonder and glory witnessed, when the Redeemer had His Exodus

from this world. We may exercise our thoughts profitably, on certain of its very significant distinctions.

The Lord, you remember, was not seen by mortal eye *in the act of rising from the dead* or going forth from the sepulchre. *He is looked upon* as He departs from earth and ascends to His Father in heaven. The reserve which covers the first Exodus, and the manifestation of the second, mutually illustrate each other. The truths of moment to be known by man were, that the Lord *resumed* (no doubt in a spiritual and glorified estate) the body broken for us; and that He *retained* it. To know that *He had resumed the body*, it was not necessary to witness the process of resumption, in the act of rising from the dead. To give assurance *that the body was retained*, the Lord was seen, in a glorified humanity, in His ascension to heaven.

“The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple,” may not, perhaps, prophesy, but, certainly, seems descriptive of, the resurrection. The circumstances in which the Saviour is first beheld within the risen “temple of His body,” have that air of suddenness which the prophet ascribes to the Lord’s coming. That He was seen there, occupying, informing, sanctifying, is enough for our faith. Accessory circumstances it may not have concerned us, even if it were possible, to witness. No human eye, therefore, beheld the Lord resuming humanity. But it is of surpassing interest to know that He *retains* it. And therefore the first martyr was gifted to exclaim—“I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” And therefore those two men who stood by the disciples on that great day, declared that He shall so come in like manner as they had seen Him ascending.

So has the Lord Jesus taken to himself, by inseparable union, the humanity which He saves and sanctifies.

Associated with humanity, He will come again.—“This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” So spake “two men which stood by the apostles in white apparel.” Two men! It is a popular impression that they who spake were angels. The Word of revelation conveys no such idea. It is true that the superior intelligence of those who spoke, may be taken to imply something different from the disciples in the order of being; but this will not justify conjectural emendations, or change rather, of the apostle’s language. If we must conjecture, let us not forsake but follow Scripture in our imaginings. It is possible to understand the apostle’s words in their precise import. Why, then, should we change them?

The same apostle who wrote of “two men” on the Mount of Ascension, is he who designated as men the two who appeared in glory with the Lord on the day of His transfiguration. Other evangelists notice the fact that Moses and Elias appeared. St. Luke adds that these two were men. “Two men,” which were Moses and Elias, spake, during the transfiguration, of His decease (or Exodus) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Two men, on the morning of the resurrection, spake to the troubled women of His Exodus from the sepulchre. Two men, on the day of ascension, spake to the apostles while gazing on His Exodus from this world. In one of the incidents thus recorded (pre-figurative, it may be, of Christ’s coming in His kingdom), the faculties of those permitted to witness the majestic vision, partook of the influences of the occa-

sion, and they knew the beings who appeared with the Lord in glory. The women at the sepulchre knew not—the disciples on the day of ascension knew not—who spake unto them; but if we may dare conjecture what Scripture has not revealed, we would manifest a more teachable spirit in believing that they who spake of the Lord's Exodus in the transfiguration, the ascension, and the tomb, were the same; and that in them the law and the prophets of the Old Testament uttered their last monition to the ministers of the New, pronouncing that He of whom they spake, who went up on high to accomplish one great portion of His work, would, in like manner, come again to effect its glorious consummation.

And the apostles, thus assured, "returned to Jerusalem with great joy"—tarried there, until they were endued with power from on High, and then, in the strength thus vouchsafed to them, went forth to encounter a world in arms against them, and to win it. How sublime an attestation was theirs to the power of Christian truth!—how animating an example have they left of Christian boldness and fidelity! Those were glorious days when the faithful followers of a crucified Saviour were spreading, fearlessly, over a hostile world the saving knowledge of His name—when the apostles of the great Redeemer, "clad in the whole armour of righteousness, their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace," went forth in their Master's name, poor, to make many rich—unlearned, to instruct the wise—feeble, but in a strength not their own, to overthrow the venerated institutions of ages, and shake to its foundations the fabric in which sin held dominion—when they rebuked the oracles into silence—unveiled

H

with bold hand superstitions before which a world bowed, and stripped them in the sight of their astonished votaries of every blandishment and delusion—when heathen priests beheld with alarm that day by day the rites of their unholy sacrifices were less numerous frequented, and with rage and terror and amazement saw their votaries abandoning pomps and luxuries venerable from long-cherished associations, and acceptable to the innate corruptions of man's heart, that they might join in the pure and simple worship of Him who was through life without a home, and who taught His followers to expect tribulation—but who sent them from heaven a Divine Comforter, and bequeathed to them in His resurrection and death, a hope full of immortality.

This was the hope through which the early Christians overcame the world. Wise men, as the world judged them, there were in the days of old—perhaps there are now—who could not understand the wisdom of that patience which hope sustained, and who accounted the Christians persons of diseased understanding. They saw how unshrinkingly the followers of a crucified man endured the afflictions to which their calling exposed them—they saw that persecution could not affright nor friendship soothe them to renounce their hopes and persuasions—they saw with what a triumphant assurance they gloried in the reproach of the Cross—with how cold or how scornful an indifference they looked away from the world's brightest attractions;—and when they beheld men, thus, as they conceived, glorying in their shame, and indifferent to the proper objects of man's exertion—they naturally concluded rather to account the Christians mad, than to acknowledge themselves in error.

They who thus haughtily contemned the religion of Jesus, were not unacquainted with the doctrine which gives to the unseen and the future that power with which sense invests the present. The philosophers, as they were styled, professed to have a hope that there would be a life after death, and entertained themselves with thoughts of its evidences and of what it promised. You can read of it in the writings they have left us—writings marvellously illustrative of that revealed truth, that the world by wisdom knew not God. Neither by wisdom could a Christian's hope be acquired or understood. Nature gave forth her revelations, and thoughtful men interpreted them. They saw the flower spring from the decayed seed, the winged and brilliant insect from the torpid worm. They saw that in the material creation nothing perishes. And they would not easily yield to the degenerate apprehension that the intellectual being of man was to become extinct by a change which did not destroy the principle of existence even in the meanest reptile.

And thus they had a hope that they were to live after death; but it was not an abiding hope. It was not a hope which could remain fixed in the soul, secure against the assaults of sophistry, or steadfast under mental depression. It could not sustain a sufferer against the malice of man or the vicissitudes of fortune. It may have served to important uses. It may have given majesty to the philosopher's speculations—it may have refined the tone of educated society, and diffused a pure and a solemn and a tender interest over the conferences of the wise and the friendships of the affectionate—but, as it had its being in the deductions of human reason, it necessarily partook of the frailty

of human reason—variable in its strength and tardy in its operation. In repose and security, when the philosopher arrayed before his mind the evidences of his hope, he could discourse eloquently on its power, and may often have been conscious of it; but in the trials in which character is really proved—in the sudden emergencies of life—under hasty sallies of the passions—when terror shook the soul, or the senses warred against virtue—in these and such instances, the hope of the wisest heathen was little felt, and its authority was generally disregarded.

An unsubstantial fantasy like this was not a true hope. It could not render the power of a Christian hope intelligible. For this there was no need of processes which convince the reason—no need to seek analogies in nature and derive argument from learned investigation. The Christian's hope rested on a surer basis. He had seen "infallible proofs" of the resurrection. He felt the power of the world to come. Therefore was his hope both sure and steadfast. To the heathen God spake of the future life through probable analogies and consequences deducible by reason. To the Christian He spake, with authority, by His only-begotten Son, by whom also He made the worlds. Here was the foundation of the true hope;—and as the foundation was strong, so was the faith abiding and effectual.

Thus are the "infallible proofs" by which the Lord showed himself alive after His passion certified to us in the faith and hope and patience of those who were privileged to receive them. Earth had no terrors for them when the light of the resurrection arose; and they who, "if in this life only they had hope, would

have been, of all men, most miserable," lived in tribulation, ever rejoicing in the conviction that God loved them, and that He whom they preached, in His own good time would take them to himself, and make them sharers in His felicity.

It is matter of fear and pain to think how the apostolic hope seems to have lost its warmth and splendour—how far more powerful the world has become in its attractions than it had been in its terrors, and how the hope for which early Christians thought it a light thing to endure affliction, has become, in the heart of many who profess to hold it, so shorn of its strength that it is more like the pagan's expectation than the Christian's. Judge whether this is not the humiliating truth. The hope of wealth—of pleasure—of distinction—has, oftentimes, an agitating power; and the hope of heaven lacks force and influence. The world is full of interest and adventure—life is kept in perpetual agitation by the active affections of man; but the passions which disturb him—the expectations which betray—the enjoyments which wither as he grasps them, are the source of this agitation—and he is, comparatively, indifferent to the one hope which cannot deceive—a hope beyond the reach of fraud and the shock of accident—to communicate which God sent into the world His only-begotten Son—to confirm which our Saviour Christ has died for our sins and risen again for our justification.

I do not dare to say that men can be found who will put away this hope from them altogether. I firmly believe, if the tempter could offer the best felicities of earth to the most miserable on earth's surface, the tempted wretch would refuse to be relieved from his

*

misery if deliverance were to be attained only by renouncing hope for ever. And, therefore, the tempter proposes no such appalling condition. He does not say renounce. He whispers only postpone—procrastinate—and thus rivets the chains of habit on many a deluded victim, who thought he was merely deferring to to-morrow the purpose he was too feeble or too distracted, at the moment he conceived it, to engage in.

Beware of procrastination. Understand what it means. Think not merely of the advantages it gives to your adversary, but look upon it in that aspect in which it defies God. What is it to say, *I will repent to-morrow*? Must not such a profession be divided into two—and is not one of them, *I will not repent to-day*? To say you will give God to-morrow, is to promise what is not yours—what may never be given you. The present is yours—has been given you—that you may give it, and yourself with it, to a merciful Saviour. To procrastinate is profaneness. It defies God, and delivers will and soul into the thralldom of an enemy.

Pray that you may be protected against this fearful delusion, under which promises of future amendment become accusing spirits against present obduracy and impenitence, and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead arrays itself in terror, not in hope. Does the world lend its influences to betray you? Think what it is—and before it is stripped of its delusions by an unconquerable hand—unveil it for yourself, and compare its promises and possessions with the gift of immortality. Is the hope of future blessedness so poor a thing as to be wisely put aside for the transient felicities of life? Are the objects of human ambition so

mighty, or the appetites within the heart of man restless, so as to justify us, even to ourselves, for being called off by them from the momentous question, "What shall I do to be saved?" He does not think so who feels that there have fallen upon him shadows of the hour in which the question is to be—not what shall he do—but what has he done—wherein has he trusted—that he may inherit eternal life? And shall we, to many of whom this hour may be at hand, live on as if it were to come never? Shall our conversation be so wholly in this world, that death, whatever be its hour, shall come upon us by surprise?

A time will come to all of us when perishable things lose their power—when the delusions of the world fade—when vanity can no more be flattered, and friendship can soothe no longer—a time when no remembrances of chequered good and evil can satisfy an awakened soul—when every thing human crumbles away, except the faith which a believer has builded on the Rock of Ages—the hope which relies not on the merits of a man, but on the mercies of a risen Saviour. And in a time like this, many a death-bed has been cheered, and many a departing saint has felt joy, and has left comfort to those who have mourned his going from them. With what consoling and elevating hope have followers of a gracious Saviour been visited in that hour—how has it been brightened! Oh! in that time of dread, when "the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint"—when a spirit is passing from the tabernacle of the flesh to appear before the throne of God—think what it is to hear the voice of the Redeemer, "Be not afraid—be of good cheer—it is I"—to feel that he whom death summons, does not go alone, in his in-

sufficiency, before a Judge whose sentence he has provoked, but that the Redeemer whom he confessed in life will acknowledge him before His Father in heaven, and will be his Mediator at the judgment-seat.

May we live so as to hope such consolation in our last earthly moments. May we find that the Saviour to whom we call in death has not been disregarded in life—and when we have passed into the region where flesh and blood enter not, may hope become certainty, and may we hear the blessed assurance, that “our warfare is accomplished—that our iniquity is pardoned.”

LECTURE VII.

ST. JOHN XX., part of verse 17.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father."

THIS prohibition of our Lord is addressed to a penitent and loving worshipper to whom He vouchsafed His first apparition after rising from the dead. Before His death, He had accepted offices of devotion from "a woman who was a sinner," such as called forth thoughts of disparagement and distrust in the mind of a scornful Pharisee. It is not the voice of a proud formalist, but of the merciful Lord himself, which forbids, after His resurrection, the touch of faith to which He had previously submitted.

The reserve, and (if we may so say) the solitariness, of character so beautifully appropriate to our Lord's sojourn on earth, after He arose from the dead, may well be suggested to our thoughts by this significant inhibition. There was a time when disciples saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him. He sat and spake with them familiarly. His comings in—His salutations—His instructions—were amply and freely vouchsafed. After His resurrection there is a change. He is no

longer subject to the laws of man's nature. Before, when it pleased Him, He raised himself above their influence. Now the change of state is when He condescends to acknowledge them. He has no home on earth. In the intervals between His various apparitions, none appears to know the place of His withdrawing. He has no companion. Around His person, as in His language, there is a mystery and solemn grandeur appropriate to one who stooped to raise fallen man from his lost estate, but yet retained the majesty of Him to whom all power was given in earth and heaven. Such thoughts are naturally suggested by the words of monition which our blessed Saviour spake on His first apparition from the dead.

But this monition is not to be considered, in itself alone, apart from the attendant circumstances by which it is limited and explained. The inhibition to Mary is not addressed to other disciples; and the Lord condescends to declare to her the reason why He pronounces it. Of other women with whom she held companionship it is said—"And as they went to tell His disciples, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came *and held Him by the feet*, and worshipped Him."* To the eleven, disturbed and affrighted, supposing "that they had seen a spirit," when suddenly "He stood in the midst of them," He said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."† And to the apostle especially slow of belief, He said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."‡

* St. Matthew xxviii. 9. † St. Luke xxiv. 39. ‡ St. John xx. 27.

Here are precepts or injunctions, apparently, at variance with each other. The tribute of reverence which Mary is forbidden, other women are permitted, to offer. The touch which is not indulged to her earnest devotion, is granted to the apostles, and enjoined on Thomas, that it may remove doubts or strengthen conviction.

However the seeming contradiction between these monitions is to be explained, they assign, manifestly, a distinction to her to whom the Lord first showed himself alive. Whether especial honor were denied or conferred, in this distinction; whether it implied acknowledgment that Mary's faith needed no further assurance; or else pronounced her former life such as to render her touch an act of profanation, was a question discussed in ancient times—a question on which it would be rashness to decide, until the scope and meaning of our Lord's address to her is thoroughly understood. It is plain, indeed, that when Thomas was commanded to convince himself by actual contact that his blessed Master was risen, the state of mind in which he had been previously existing was one of almost faithlessness. It is plain that there was frailness in the hearts of the terrified disciples when, in condescension to their doubts, the Lord invited their touch. And it seems manifest that there is faith and earnest devotion in the promptitude with which Mary, in the moment in which she hears her name pronounced, answers to her beloved Master's call. Thus far we might account it clear that the invitation and the command addressed to the other apostles and to Thomas was indulgence to their slowness or hardness of heart—an indulgence not extended to Mary, because her lively faith and deep devotion did not need it. She

may have been distinguished above the other women as they were above the apostles.

In discriminating between the condition of servant and friend, our blessed Saviour once placed the distinction on this: "The servant knoweth not what his master doeth;"—perhaps honor may have been vouchsafed to Mary in the explanation given to her of the prohibition by which her tribute of devotion was repelled. "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father in heaven." Here is the reason why her offered worship is not accepted. If it contain a revelation of any great truth respecting the character or the office of Jesus, there was honor in receiving it, or in furnishing the occasion on which it was revealed.

The reason assigned for the Lord's prohibition contemplates a period of time commencing with the resurrection, and which is not to close until Jesus has ascended to the Father. What office did the Saviour execute—in what capacity was He to be regarded—during that interval?

The ceremonial of the solemn day, on which the law required that the people should afflict themselves, was ordained to be a type of our Lord's atonement for sin. On that day only, the high priest, and he alone, was permitted, and required, to enter into the most Holy Place in the Temple. On that day he was to appear more immediately in the presence of God; and if, in his preparation for the dread meeting, there was aught sinful, defective, or irregular, in the sacrifice, the offering, or the priest, he suffered, it was believed, the penalty of death. Indeed, God declared the peril of the priest's services on that day, and prescribed the observances by which He would be propitiated.

“The Lord said to Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not, at all times, into the Holy Place, within the vail, before the mercy-seat, *that he die not*; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat.”*

On one day in the year the prohibition to the priests is suspended, but suspended in the instance of the high priest alone. On the same day the injunction which guarded the sanctity of the Holy Place takes effect more widely. On this day, people and priests, with the one exception, are not only forbidden to enter the Holiest, but are for a time excluded from a part of the Temple in which, on other days, they were permitted to present themselves.

“And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the Holy Place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation.”†

So was it proclaimed in the law. The solitariness of the high priest, in the acts of this great day, was to be respected. Minister and offering were to be protected against the profanation of contact with mortality. Even the breath of man should not sully them. The tabernacle of the congregation, when the priest passed through it on this day, was to be a solitude.

It is not necessary to adduce the concurrent testimonies of learned men to the general acknowledgment that this day of atonement prefigured the time of the Great Sacrifice for sin. Inspiration has so pronounced it.

“The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

* Lev. xvi. 2-4.

† Lev. xvi. 17.

“But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people :

“The Holy Ghost this signifying—that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present. . . .

“But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building:

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”*

As the priest, on the day of atonement, in the moments which intervened between the death of the victim, and the oblation in the Holy Place—so was the Lord, from His resurrection to the moment of His entrance into the Holiest of all. He was our High Priest; bearing the holy oblation. His office may instruct us how His words should be interpreted. It is true, no such dread result as was threatened in the law could be apprehended here. The offering conveyed by the high priest of old was secured against the defilement of a mortal touch. Christ permitted some, invited and enjoined others, to touch His sacred person. But we can understand His prohibitory injunction, in its significant appropriateness to the occasion;—a prohibition in which He rather showed the office to which He had been called, than interdicted worshippers to approach Him. In truth, in the words addressed to Mary we can hear, as it were, the office of the priest, uttering

* Heb. ix. 6, 7, 8, &c.

its monitions. Approach not the tabernacle when the priest, with the offering, proceeds to make atonement, was, substantially, the injunction of the typical ordinance of old. And when our High Priest, bearing the body which is to be the all-prevailing oblation—and which is also the temple He has raised up—a living tabernacle—commands a worshipper that she touch Him not, because He has not yet entered into the Holiest of all—is not such a prohibition in apt correspondence with the law of old—and is it not meetly significant of the office borne by Him who utters it?

If Mary understood the words in this suggestive signification, she felt honored in being made a recipient of the sublime truth they disclosed to her. We have no means of knowing whether she did so understand them. But we know that they have been written for our learning. The words of everlasting life are ours no less than theirs to whom they were originally spoken. And we may strive, with prayer and meditation, even where they seem “hard sayings,” to gather wisdom from them. If, indeed, we were to supply what seems to us deficient, or to bring light on what is obscure, by comments found in conferences which have no better witness than tradition, and may have no holier origin than a pious fancy, we would be transgressing the limits prescribed to us, and marring the simplicity of Gospel truth. But if we apply to one part of the Divine records, what aptly supplies a want or brightens an obscurity, from another, and do so with deliberation and patience, we but avail ourselves of the rule which declares that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private, that is, isolated, interpretation. In the wisdom taught by this good rule, it becomes conceivable, that

we may have, in some instances, knowledge more extensive and accurate than was vouchsafed to those who lived in the earliest ages of the church. The question for us, then, is not how did Mary understand her blessed Master's words, but how does Holy Scripture interpret them. They correspond with a prohibition of the old law. They are spoken at a time prefigured in the old law by the day on which the prohibition took effect—spoken by Him of whose crowning act of mercy the ceremonial of that day in the olden time was a type and shadow:—may we not understand them in their typical significancy?—may we not understand the Lord, in speaking them, as appropriating to himself the types of the occasion on which we can regard them as first pronounced, in the command, "There shall be no man in the tabernacle when he goeth in to make atonement?"

This was not the only instance in which our Lord's words and acts were significant of correspondence between His offering for sin and the ceremonial by which it was foreshadowed in the law. .

His abstinence, at the celebration of the Passover, we have already seen, implied recognition of a precept addressed to priests under the law, and was appropriate to the ceremonial of the day of atonement.

The record, mercifully provided, respecting the clothes in which the dead body of the Lord had been enveloped, and which the apostles beheld in the sepulchre, may, perhaps, be understood as suggesting further correspondence with the legal types and ordinances. Peter "seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about His head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."* Hence, it has been

* St. John xx. 6, 7.

argued, against calumniators and sceptics, that the disciples had not stolen the Lord's body. Ought not the notice be regarded under another aspect—as designed for those who believe, not less than for those who doubt? Should it not be compared with the rules prescribed for the priesthood as well as with the suborned falsehoods of a Roman soldiery? “The priests, when they were come up in their courses to the service, put off their ordinary wearing clothes, washed themselves in water, and put on the holy garments.”* Among the instructions addressed to the priest for the ceremonial of the day of atonement, the injunction respecting his vesture is emphatically repeated.† Why should we not regard the notice provided for us respecting the garments left behind in the sepulchre as testimony that the ordinance of the law was respected? Many an act of not graver moment, we are told, was done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled. May not the linen clothes in the sepulchre remind us of the prescribed rule for the typical priesthood of the law, and testify that the “High Priest of good things to come,” complied with it? Surely there is nothing overstrained in this sober inference from Scripture.

The injunction to Mary, understood in its typical significance, is in harmony with the recognitions of the Lord's office. Before His death, at the Passover, He observed the law of abstinence prescribed to the priests whose ministration was typical of His—the tomb wherein His dead body lay, bore testimony, that in rising, as Priest, to the glorious office appointed Him, He observed the rule prescribed respecting vesture; and when He

* Lightfoot, “Prospect of the Temple.”

† Lev. xvi. 4-24.

showed himself alive first, after His passion, He addressed to Mary the monition which would have been appropriate to a high priest under the law, when the victim, on the great day of atonement, had been slain, and not yet offered in the holy place. "He washed His garments in the evening in wine, that is, in His own blood, and became clean; and thence, perhaps, after the resurrection, when Mary would embrace His feet, He said to her, Touch me not."*

The invitation to His disciples is not less appropriate, nor more difficult to understand, than the prohibition addressed to Mary. The testimony of sight alone would not have convinced them of the resurrection. When they beheld the risen Saviour, St. Luke instructs us "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." It was meet that the "thoughts which arose in their hearts"—thoughts natural to man—should be tranquillised, as they were, by an overpowering weight of evidence. They were to preach "Jesus and the resurrection" to a hostile world. The conviction which was to sustain them in so arduous a mission was to be deep and strong, and guarded against doubt and sophistry. Therefore they were invited to confirm the testimony of one sense by that of another; and, in the invitation thus given to the apostles, provision was made for the wants and the solitudes of the human mind throughout all generations of men.

The principle upon which this permission was granted is manifest. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." A ceremonial rule, which now became obsolete, would have prejudiced the cause of truth. To inspire and

* Origen, Hom. ix. in Lev.

confirm faith in the apostles' hearts was more to the glory of God and the good of man than to observe rigidly what was now but a form. And thus, had we no other explanation to receive, we could understand why Thomas was urged to "thrust his hands" into the side of the Lord, that he should be not faithless, but believing.

But it seems to be a natural principle of interpretation, that where contradictory precepts are declared, on the same authority, they should not be understood merely in the letter in which they seem adverse to each other, but in a sense, if such be made known with authority, in which they will agree.

And such a sense is obviously discoverable. The precepts addressed respectively to Mary and to the apostles, contradictory as they seem to be in the obligations they impose, are "at one" in their spiritual significancy. The prohibition to Mary was appropriate, as we have seen, to the priesthood in which the risen Saviour realised and consummated the law which was to cease. What He spake to the apostles was in the spirit and power of a priesthood which is to endure for ever. The Apostle Paul is careful to show the superiority of this spiritual priesthood. And the words of our Lord instruct us what was the nature of His ministration. Of the priest Melchisedec, we are told that he brought forth bread and wine. The bread which our Lord would give was, He declared, His flesh, which He would give for the life of the world—associating thus the priesthood in which He should accomplish the atonement typified in the law, with that priesthood in which He should minister life to His people. Under the one aspect He was the

Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Under the other, He was the living bread that came down from heaven, and the true vine of which His redeemed and adopted were the branches. Bear these distinctions in mind as you reflect on the precepts you desire to understand and reconcile.

In the inhibition to Mary, the ministration of death uttered its last monition. In the invitation to the apostles spake the Priest "who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." The two priesthoods had, each, its respective character and office. The one made man sensible of his remoteness and estrangement from the source of all good, represented him, ministered and offered gifts for him, on God's altar. The other, in the one act of ministration in which it is shown, ministered *to* man, and the gifts it offered are those by which life is sustained and invigorated.

Both priesthoods aptly meet in the Mediator of the New Testament. Both are essential to the efficacy of mediation. In the one He offers a spotless life for the sins of the whole world—in the other He offers to the ransomed by His death, the life He gave for their redemption. In the one He propitiated God to pardon sin by the offering of himself once offered—in the other He continually pleads with the sinners for whom He died, that for His sake they become reconciled to God. Now, when we bear in mind, as matter of certainty, that our Lord was the great High Priest in whom the types of the law were fulfilled—that He was and is also the Priest to whom it was pronounced, "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec;"—and

when we consider the words addressed to Mary and to the apostles, with reference respectively to each of these priestly ministrations, it is impossible not to feel that they are, each of them, appropriate and significant.

Thus far we have regarded the prohibition and the injunction of our Lord in their significance as appropriate to His twofold office. There is another aspect in which we may consider them addressed as an useful monition to all who profess and call themselves Christians. Two great revelations have been made. Christ died for our sins once—He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He ever liveth to mediate for and with us. The death which He offered to God as a propitiation for sin, He offers continually to man as a manifestation and proof of love for the creature He came to save.

Now, it is clear that these two revelations of mercy prescribe distinct and appropriate duties. Judge whether they are not enjoined in the two precepts we have been considering. That the death of Christ shall have been accepted as a sacrifice for sin, is a truth, for which we have the sure word of Scripture as our authority—*from* which we learn much that governs our habits of life and thought, and around which, nevertheless, there is mystery which makes us feel the limits that have been set to our understanding. Upon this great revelation of Divine mercy we should gaze with the reverence and devotion in which Mary worshipped. Faith and devotion—self-renouncement—self-abasement, are the dispositions in which it should be contemplated. That we are not our own—that we are bought with a price—that because of the sin which brought death into the

world, Christ came from heaven to die for sin—that His work of salvation is finished, and that all who are true believers are accepted for His sake;—the effect of this upon our souls should be, not to stimulate inquiry how these things be, but to generate a just sense of our unworthiness by nature, and a thankful trust in Him who hath wrought redemption for us.

But there is another revelation. In His New Testament, the Lord commands that we drink His blood. To us, in the person of His apostle, He enjoins that we put our fingers into the print of His wounds—that we thrust our hands into His side—that we behold and see His hands and His feet—not for the purpose of exploring the mystery how the sufferings of the Saviour have propitiated for us Divine justice—but that every fibre and faculty of our being may become sensible to the love which thus prevailing commends itself to our affections. If, in the revelation that by His own blood Christ had obtained eternal redemption, there is death to our self-esteem, and to every inordinate affection, there is life and power in the knowledge that He hath ordained a ministry of reconciliation, in which He offers to us the sacrifice by which He has propitiated justice, and that He has appointed ambassadors who, in His stead, beseech His creatures that they be reconciled to God.

Is this too great a condescension? It is too great, transcendently too great, for man to have anticipated. It is not so great as to exceed the power of Him who hath called creation into being. It is not so great as to exhaust the mercy of Him who hath visited man in his estrangement. It is not so great as to oppress

the faith of those to whom God hath revealed the riches of His mercy, and in whom faith worketh by love. It is not too great to be believed by any who will not erect their own imaginations as fastnesses of resistance to the revealed Word of God. May we receive, in a docile spirit, and to our souls' good, the saving truth so benignly revealed to us.

LECTURE VIII.

GALATIANS III. 20.

"Now a mediator is not a *mediator* of one—but God is one."

I HAVE selected these words, not in a confident hope that my exposition of them can elucidate their acknowledged difficulty, but because, even imperfectly apprehended, they declare a salutary truth, to which, obvious as it may seem, it is meet that your attention be solicited.

"A mediator is not of one." To the office of mediation it is essential that it be exercised for, at least, each of two parties. An intercessor is regarded as especially intercessor of the party for whom he intercedes:—he, therefore, *may be* of one. An advocate *is* of one, for of the other party implied in the relation which his name suggests, he is not the advocate but the adversary. A mediator *is not of one*, for his office implies advocacy and intercession, towards, and on behalf of, each of the parties between whom he mediates. Thus, in a peculiar and emphatic sense, a mediator is not of one. He who defends the cause of any individual whom he patronises, is *an advocate*;—he who asks mercy or favor for any individual in whom he feels interest, is *an intercessor*;—he, only, is *a mediator*, who exercises the same office

towards each of two parties, representing to each and advocating with each, the claims of the other; and interceding, not with one only, but with both, that they be reconciled.

Thus far the apostle's words are applicable to *the office* of a mediator—they may be understood in reference also to *the person* by whom that office is borne. If two parties at variance are to be reconciled, he to whom the mediator's office is assigned must not be *exclusively* in the interest of either. If hostile states are to be brought into relations of amity, it is not a sovereignty or nation, in alliance of aggression and defence with one of the conflicting powers, which can properly mediate between them. If there be civil dissension, between a prince and subjects in revolt, it is not one of the armed insurgents who can be mediator between the rebels and their sovereign. The prevailing mediator will be one who is not among the adversaries, or the partizans, of either of the parties whom he persuades; who is, indeed, the friend of both, having sympathies with each, and careful that the interests of neither shall suffer from his agency. In all these senses, we may, perhaps, understand or apply the words in my text. The mediator, in person, as in office, "*is not of one.*"

The word, mediator, is of very unfrequent occurrence in Holy Scripture. It is found not more, perhaps, than six times in our authorised version; and in all instances, is used by the Apostle Paul alone.—Learned expositors have alleged that it is applied to two persons—to Moses, as mediator of the Old Covenant, and to our Lord, the Mediator of the New. But the application of the term is the act of man;

it is not found in Scripture. Moses, indeed, declares that he stood between the people and God. By his hand, it is also said, the commandments were delivered. But all this does not necessarily amount to mediation—and it is not once said by Moses, or of him, in the Books of the Prophets or the Law, that he was a mediator between God and man. On the contrary, in the narrative of that great interposition, from which it has been argued that he whom the people delegated to appear before God in their behalf, was a mediator, there is evidence, rather, to prove that he was not. On that momentous occasion there was a divine recognition and approval of the principle of mediation—a promise that, in time to come, there should be raised up one who would satisfy the cravings of hearts troubled by the wants and apprehensions of fallen humanity; but there was no acceptance of Moses as mediator on the part of God.

“And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoke.

“*I will raise them up a Prophet from their brethren,* like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”*

Under circumstances of emergency the people might appoint a representative or intercessor;—they could not ensure his acceptance in the presence of God. They

* Deut. xviii. 17-19.

might avow (in that shuddering sense of frailty which knows that God is of purer eye than to behold iniquity) the want and desire of an intercessor ; but while thus faithfully interpreting the testimony which man's nature offers of its fall, it was not for them to make provision for the want which distressed them. Although they had well spoken that which they spake unto Moses, he was not accepted as the intercessor in whom the divine purpose was to be fulfilled. He whom God would approve was to be *the Prophet whom He would raise up*.

However we interpret this divine promise, we learn from it that Moses was not accepted as *the mediator*. "There is one God, and one Mediator between man and God—the man Christ Jesus."

"One Mediator—the man Christ Jesus !" The apostle who was inspired to pronounce this truth is the same who declares the condition essential to a mediator's being and office, and he shows also that in the mediation of the Lord Jesus this condition has been observed.

In His *person*, our Mediator was not of one. Before He became man, He was "in the form of God"*—"the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person."† From that divine estate He humbled himself, and, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself took part in the same."‡ Here is a twofold constitution of being—divine, in which Christ is one with the Father and the Father one with Him—human, in which He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."|| And, further, we are instructed that this assumption of our nature, with its sympathies, was essential to the office which Christ

* Phil. ii. 6.

† Heb. i. 3.

‡ Heb. ii. 14.

|| Heb. iv. 15

exercises. "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.

"Wherefore in all things *it behoved Him* to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a *merciful and faithful High Priest* in things pertaining to God, *to make reconciliation* for the sins of the people."*

Thus are we instructed by the apostle as to that distinctness of natures in which the *person* of the Mediator is "not of one"—the glory which He had with the Father before the world was—the nature which He assumed, and the state to which He humbled himself "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Nor is the mediatorial *office* "of one." "Christ hath not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for 'us;'"† and there "He ever liveth to make intercession" for His people—our Mediator, pleading His meritorious cross and passion to make reconciliation for our sins. And He hath established a ministry of reconciliation on earth, and commissioned apostles and ministers to plead with man the same merits which He pleads with the Creator of all things. Thus is mediation not of one. In heaven, it intercedes with God, that, for the sake of Christ crucified, He will blot out iniquity and be reconciled to ransomed man:—in earth, it intercedes *with man*, that, for the love shown him by Christ crucified, he will renounce his iniquity and be reconciled to a merciful God.

In His priesthood, also—the priesthood appropriate

* Heb. ii. 16, 17.

† Heb. ix. 24.

to mediation—Christ is not one. Priest, in whom the types of the law had their fulfilment, He made the one offering for the redemption of man. Priest, after the order of Melchisedec, He imparts *to* man, “dead unto sin,” life, and aliment of the life in which he should have his spiritual being.

Thus faithfully has the condition declared by the apostle been complied with. That Prophet raised up to be the Mediator between God and man, in His person—His priesthood—His mediatorial office—“is not of one.”

May not this twofold aspect of mediation lessen the difficulty of the passage from which my text is taken? Is the apostle showing that the law itself bears prophetic testimony to the *better dispensation* by which it was to be superseded? The law contemplated a Mediator. Moses was a type of Him—the law itself a servant, who should conduct to Him. In the offering and the ministry of Christ mediation is completed. May it not have been the scope of the apostle’s reasoning to prove that the law, in its type and prophecy of this divine consummation, acknowledged the superiority of that Gospel scheme in which the typical mediation of the imperfect system became a great and saving reality.

But, whatever the purport of the apostle’s argument, and whatever the bearing upon it of the truth declared in my text, that truth, enunciated, as it is, with the authority of revelation, apart from, and altogether independently of, the reasoning in which it is found, is pregnant with valuable instruction, and will suggest reflections of great practical importance.

“There is one God, and one Mediator between God

and men (or, as in the literal form of the original, of God and of men)—the man Christ Jesus.” Were His office more narrowly limited, He would not be a *Mediator*. Were His ministration that, only, of offering sacrifice for sin, He might be an intercessor, an advocate, a priest—He would not be a Mediator. Or were His ministration limited within the offices of instructing man and working miracles for his benefit, He might be a prophet, a deliverer—but such offices would not complete a scheme of mediation. In that Christ hath entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us—and that He hath appointed a ministry of reconciliation on earth, and sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to bless it, and to endue its ministers with power, He hath declared himself the Mediator;—of man with God, from whom He hath obtained remission of sin—of God with men, whom He invites to accept the life He has purchased for them. “There is one Mediator,” “who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Such is the office of the Mediator, the one true “Mediator between God and man”—Mediator of the New Testament, who “made peace through the blood of His Cross,” and whose ambassadors, as though God did beseech by them, pray, in Christ’s stead, the creatures for whose sins He died, that they be “reconciled to God.”

Do we believe this? Does God condescend to ask of guilty creatures, that they renounce their enmity? Do we believe that the Mediator of the New Testament, who has pleaded His merits before God for the pardon of sin, asks the sinner’s love in recompense for these

same merits, and for the love they testify? Doubt and fear within the human mind betray man's sense of unworthiness; but cannot obscure the light of God's revealed truth, or confuse the message of His Gospel. It is from the Divine Word, not from the imaginations of man's heart, we are to learn what God has taught; the very reluctance and hesitation with which we yield to the proofs of a Saviour's condescension, should inspire us with distrust of the spirit which renders us "slow of heart to believe;" and even the accusing timidity of our fallen nature should be converted into a salutary fear, that dares not to doubt any word of grace and mercy which the Lord hath spoken.

The occasion on which mediation, in its completeness, that is, in its twofold character, was inaugurated, may have been in our Lord's institution of the Holy Eucharist. "And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Thus was mediation inaugurated. The life ("the blood, which is the life") offered to God for the remission of sins, is now, *for the first time, given* (it had been previously promised) to man, and, *because* it has been offered, he is commanded to drink of it.

We have already considered the narrative of this divine institution—it remains that we regard it, now, as it illustrates the completeness of our Lord's mediation.

The Eucharist is the memorial rite in which the atoning death of our Lord is to be shown until His coming again. That great propitiation was prefigured, until the time of their consummation, in the sacrifices

of the Law. Until then, the appointed type of that which is life, and which maketh atonement, was a substance to which we feel something of an instinctive repulsion—which was, moreover, the subject of a prohibition, rendered awful by the sanction of the heaviest penal consequences. This prohibition, in force during the time of the patriarchal dispensation, was re-published under the law, and was explained. *Because* the blood was the life—*because* it was to make atonement on the altar, and to be shed for the remission of sins, man was not to partake of it. Thus, from the beginning of the world, to the same night in which Jesus was betrayed, the offering typical of the blood shed upon the Cross was made in a form in which man was forbidden to partake of it. In the memorials in which the Lord hath commanded that Christian believers show His death—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not *the communion* of the blood of Christ"—who will say that a prohibition, in force from at least the deluge to the night in which the Lord Jesus was betrayed—changed into an invitation from that time to this, and until Christ's coming again—has not been designed to admonish us of our greatly altered condition? And when we bear in mind that the same reasons by which the prohibition was vindicated in time past are those by which the invitation is now commended, shall we account it too much to say that all has been designed to set forth to us, with more prevailing efficacy, the privilege of being brought, by the merits and mercy of our Redeemer, within the sphere of His gracious mediation.

Under this impression, we are bound carefully to keep apart in our thoughts the two aspects in which

the great sacrifice for sin should be regarded. There is, in the doctrine of salvation, much, necessarily, which passes man's comprehension. That He who was the express image of the Father's person, should take our nature upon Him, and be a Man of Sorrows, and submit to the death upon the Cross—and that the death of the Spotless should be to the transgressor a propitiation for sin—may well be beyond our power to comprehend, as it is altogether apart from our ordinary rules and habits of reasoning.

And yet, transcendently above our comprehension as are parts of this great mystery, we seem endowed with power to feel that the objections which our frail reason could urge against the doctrine of Christ's vicarious sufferings, are not admissible. If there be an innate principle in our being, that is one, which certifies to us the truth and holiness of this great doctrine. It is not merely that we can understand and estimate the monitions of experience instructing us how many times good has been obtained and evil inflicted through an alien instrumentality—how many a time the guilty have escaped punishment because the blameless suffered for them—and in how many an instance power has accepted the vicarious substitution of an unoffending party, as if he satisfied, by his submission, the conditions of a law from which a transgressor had escaped. It is not merely a knowledge that such incidents have been, but that there is some faculty not yet developed within us, which seems to certify that all this is right—some faculty which still prompts friends, in the fervor of a high enthusiasm, to offer themselves as victims in the place of those whom they love, and which (perhaps in the same proportion as minds are elevated and hearts

K

noble) influences those who hear of such self-sacrifices to look upon them with respect and admiration.

But whatever obscurity there may be in the great truth of mediation—that is to say, whatever obscurity there may be for us, rests upon that aspect of the doctrine which it is not given us to look upon. It is of great moment to remember, that, if there be, in the scheme of mediation, difficulties which reason cannot perfectly explore and understand, reason can also pronounce that the part of the system where they are found is a part which it knew to be beyond its proper province, and in which, therefore, it should look to find the difficulties it meets there. And, thus, reason becomes monitor to itself, and is warned to desist from prosecuting researches where man should only believe and adore.

And thus, too, repelled from inquiry where it has learned that inquiry is vain, the mind of man returns to that province where knowledge is abundantly provided for it. If we know not how the death of the righteous should be accepted as a propitiation for the sins of the unjust, are we at any loss to know and feel why and how the death of the righteous for the sake of the unjust *should affect the hearts and lives of those for whom it has purchased salvation?* What has made the heaven of heathenism populous with mortals exalted into the ranks of those phantoms who were worshipped as gods? What has caused many a grateful people to forget the vices and crimes of rulers or deliverers who have served them well, and to erect altars and statues to men (in their private habits) of corrupt lives, but who, in their public capacity, were hailed as saviours of their country? Death in that country's

cause has breathed immortality upon their names, and the human heart has enshrined them in its most cherished recollections. Nor is it to the love only of the country or the people they have benefited, their memory is commended. The love of such excellence is inseparable from our constitution; and however distant and remote may be the time or the place of great actions, such as history records and the poet loves to adorn, the heart that does not beat high and burn at the remembrance of them, is pronounced cold and sordid.

If the mediation of our blessed Saviour to man, and with man, be judged of by the witness of this universal principle of our nature, it is not merely permissible to make it the subject of reflection and thought, but it so commends itself to all the faculties of our being—intellect—imagination—affections—that the processes of pious thought in which we meditate on the doctrine of mediation and redemption, will be among the appointed agencies to render it most effectual.

In a world, where all else is obedient to the will of Him who made it, man finds himself the solitary rebel. In every thing around him he sees submissiveness to the law of its being—within him there is a spirit of waywardness and discontent. He knows that obedience is the characteristic of all physical creation, and in his exercises of intellect assumes this truth as a principle on which scientific certainty depends. To acquire a knowledge of the law imposed on any agent in nature is to acquire a power of constructing its history, and of directing and controlling, perhaps, its apparently most erratic and ungovernable movements.

In such a world as this, the creature originally

made in the likeness of God, and placed in dominion over inferior nature, has fallen from his high estate, and swerved into disobedience. A principle of rebellion has insinuated itself into his will—the imaginations of his heart have become evil—to the law of God he bids defiance—for God's mercies he returns ingratitude—to warnings of wrath and invitations to repent, he is obdurate; and although every day's experience admonishes him that his mortal existence is precarious and brief, he passes the fleeting life, that may at any moment end, as if there were no future to follow it.

Yet God has spared him! Let us not, by any false humility, deceive ourselves or darken council. To reclaim one such creature—intelligent—immortal—capable of knowing God, and of being made obedient to His laws—to reclaim one man to his place in the harmonies of being, is an attestation of more glory to the power and mercy of the Most High, than the creation of a new material world. And when revelation instructs us, that, for this fallen creature—to make atonement for his iniquity—to satisfy the justice he had offended—our Saviour Christ has died;—to reclaim this lost creature—to awaken within his heart penitence, and faith, and hope—to win his love from influences which have perverted and would destroy him—a crucified Saviour pleads with him the unutterable sufferings endured for his sake, and the inexhaustible love they testify—can we not discern a marvellous consistency in the divine scheme of salvation, and a most benign and wise accommodation to the wants and weaknesses of the creature whom God would deliver?

Examine yourselves. There is a witness within you

testifying to the condescension with which you are cared for in the mediation of the Lord. If you have ever been desirous to seek reconciliation with an estranged friend, would not your difficulty be greatly augmented if you had to make a confession that you had wronged him, without good ground to hope for an acceptable response. If he whom you would conciliate were to meet you with frozen collectedness of manner, might it not be that the intention with which you approached him would become chilled within your heart, and your purpose would be unexpressed? But if you were cheered by any sign of encouragement—a changing cheek—a suffused eye—a trembling lip—any outward indication that the love you once relied on may have slept, but was not dead—then would you, with an overflowing heart, tell out all your feelings, and think no humiliation a dishonor.

God does not leave us abject. We have a Mediator. We have not merely an Advocate with the Father—the propitiation for our sins—but we have a Saviour who mediates *with us*. He has borne our iniquities, and satisfied for us the exactments of the law—has combated for us and prevailed against the adversary—has made on our behalf the acceptable offering before our Father in heaven. What remains?—No more sacrifice for sin. What enmity is yet to be subdued? None but that which lurks in the recesses of a human heart. And Christ comes to prevail against this—and to cast out the unseemly inmate from the abode that should be His temple. He comes, in the form and the vesture in which He has suffered and has gotten the victory, and urges, to overcome the principle of sin within us, the sorrows He has suffered for our sake, and the

surpassing love they testify—"Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Behold, and see "what manner of love is mine."

But—"a Mediator is not of one." No man who declines the offer of a Saviour's grace can discern a Mediator in the Lord. If we reject His offered mercies, we abide without the sphere of His mediation. Do you ask—is mercy offered to you—may you accept? Oh! distrust not. This would, indeed, be degenerate. Doubt not that He who addresses you as a Mediator will also hear your supplications, and grant you the power you solicit. Only "watch and pray"—meditate and send up the voice of supplication. Is your heart cold and dead to the feelings the Lord's mediation would awaken? Let the thoughts of Christ and His Cross rest upon it. Graves were rent asunder when the Lord died—"bodies of saints which slept" arose at His resurrection. Fear not: man's heart is not colder than the marble sepulchre. Words of everlasting life have not lost the power to quicken the buried feelings of penitence and faith within you. Are you sore assaulted by strong passions? Bring them before the Saviour—compel them to gaze upon the marred countenance, and the bleeding brow, and the diadem of thorns—evil spirits fled from the presence of the Son of Man—lawless passions will feel rebuked by His sufferings—and the heart will learn in them the heinousness of the sin for which they have wrought redemption.

"A mediator is not of one." Observe how the Gospel narrative recording the prohibition to Mary is followed in close sequence* by that which contains the memorable

* St. John xx. 15-27.

injunction to Thomas. Such an arrangement seems manifestly designed for our instruction. There is a sense in which the commands so brought together seem at variance—there is a sense in which they harmonise—mutually illustrating each other, and both meetly attendant on a revelation partly apprehensible by human faculties, and in part above our reason. In this sense we should understand and apply them. Believe with thanksgiving that you have an Advocate with the Father—and, as you think upon the Propitiation for sin—the High Priest of your calling—adore with Mary, in devout prostration of heart and mind, the wisdom you have not faculties thoroughly to understand. As the doctrine of mediation turns a glorious aspect on *us*, profit by the encouragement to make your soul acquainted with its graciousness. Abide in its influence. Remember that Christ commends to you His sufferings—His bruised and crucified body—“Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.”

THE END.

8 JU 53

